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FALL
ISSUE

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PUBLICATION

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By F. E. RECHNITZER

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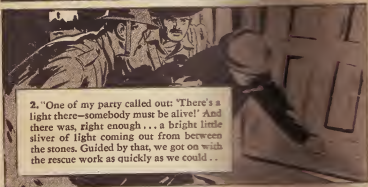
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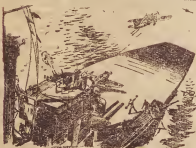
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ARMY NAVY FLYING STORIES

VOL. III, NO. 1

EVERY STORY BRAND NEW

FALL ISSUE



AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER NOVELET

FLAT-TOP PATROL

By F. E. RECHNITZER

Suspected of negligence and treachery, Pilot Reginald Niebling battles to vindicate himself in a welter of furious action amid blasting bombs and flaming gunfire! . . . 15

AN EXCITING ACTION NOVELET

TEAMWORK IN THE TROPICS William O'Sullivan 36

Bull McThom was strictly a solo fighter—until he came up against real war and learned his lesson!

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Larry Wade, Naval Air Cadet, sets his sights for a sabotage ring

GREEN FLIGHT, OUT! Clifford D. Simak 61

Brave men rise from the past to aid a stricken pilot

HAS-BEENS DIE HARD John L. Benton 72

There's no age limit to a Yank flier's fighting courage

GLASSHOUSE GLADIATOR Stuart Campbell 81

Bombardier Jocko Hanlon was in dutch with his officers, until—

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J. E. SMITH
President

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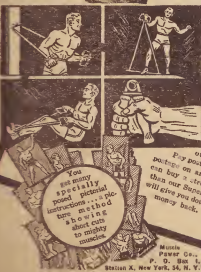


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The TAKEOFF

A Department for Readers



BEFORE very long, America will know whether or not its high air command was right. Since the very beginning of our collaboration with Britain, General Arnold and his aides have insisted on continuing the long-time American policy of high precision bombing against selected and visible targets—in short, daytime aerial attack with near perfect marksmanship against the night saturation tactics of the R.A.F.

Not since the days of 1918, when General "Black Jack" Pershing held out against the combined persuasions of Marshals Foch and Petain and Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig for the creation of an independent American Army in France, has our upper case military stuck so stubbornly to its tactical and strategic guns.

In the modern controversy, the British, sure of their tactics thanks to the undoubted success of their mass raids on Germany, have done everything but hit our leaders—Arnold, Spaatz, Taker and the late General Andrews—over the head with propeller shafts to get them to put dampers on the exhausts of our Fortresses and Liberators, increase their bomb load and send them along as partners on the night raiding of the European citadel.

They Stuck to Their Guns

But American commanders have stuck to their guns and now the results are beginning to show. The principle on which our airmen are operating is that bombs can be directed to hit a bull's-eye on the nose when the target is visible. Our whole bombing ideal is conceived and developed along those lines.

Our big bombers are far more than mere flying freight cars for high explosives—they are precision instruments designed to give the bombardier a perfect platform from which to lay his eggs as well as to give him maximum protection from anti-aircraft and fighter plane opposition while he is laying them.

The bombsight itself is a miracle of precision, and our bomber crews are put together and trained together toward a unity which would put a crack college football team to shame.

The bombs themselves are created with a variety and a fine-tooled care which is undreamt of by the munitions makers of other countries—for it is as important that the right bomb be used for each occasion as it is that this bomb should hit its target squarely.

Where the aim of the British night bombers is to raze vast areas in which vital targets are contained, it is the goal of our air force bomb-

bardiers to destroy only the most important bottlenecks of the Nazi industrial machine. Our air attackers use smaller bombs as a rule, seldom go out in waves of much more than a hundred at a time.

If They Could Do It

To judge the almost certain effect of this sort of attack on the enemy, let us consider what a few such precision raids successfully carried out could do to our war industry were the enemy in position to make such attacks on the continental United States.

Operating from New England bases, our foe would be able to isolate Manhattan by blasting bridges, railroad stations and tunnel entrances. He could, in a hop, a skip and a jump, knock out the great ovens of Pittsburgh upon which almost all of our heavy metal war production depends. On longer missions, he could blast Detroit's big factories, including the River Rouge plant.

He could blast the power stations at Niagara Falls and, with daringly executed precision raids, destroy most of the Tennessee Valley dams for long periods of time. Meanwhile, the industries and transportation facilities of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, including Baldwin Locomotive, where many of our tanks are built, would be taking a painful and production-retarding shellacking.

Such an assault would raise hob with our war effort, to put it mildly. The entire spine of our heavy industry would be dislocated. And it is just such an attack that our bombers are today beginning to carry out in force against the industrial heart of Germany and Occupied Europe. Anyone who thinks it isn't knocking the heart out of the Nazi war machine has only to consider the two paragraphs preceding this one.

Eventually, of course, our invasion of every territory will come. But it will not come before Nazi factories, canals, airfields, railroads and fortifications have been all but completely paralyzed. It will not come until our high command is sure that it will be a successful thrust.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

THE next issue of ARMY NAVY FLYING STORIES leads off with an action-packed novelet of air war in the Southwest Pacific, "Lightning over New Guinea," by Robert Sidney Bowen.

"Tut" Tittle had an axe to grind with a
(Continued on page 12)



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CITY.....STATE.....



This man was taught not to drink water

Drinking water is scarce in North Africa. And what there is, is likely to be bad.

So before our soldiers landed there, they were weaned away from water. A dash of iodine in their drinking water served the double purpose of disinfecting it, and making it taste awful. By the time the boys landed in Africa, they'd lost all taste for water.

The favorite prepared drink is lemonade. Field Ration K provides it—along with veal, pork, sausage, coffee, bouillon, malted milk tablets, biscuits, chocolate and chewing gum—all in a 33-ounce pack.

Sounds like somebody was taking pretty

good care of our boys, doesn't it? And that's right. American soldiers are the best-fed, best-equipped, best-cared-for in the world.

But keeping them that way takes money. So much money that Uncle Sam asks us to invest not 10% or 15% or 20%, *but all we can in War Bonds.*

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When closed, this handsome Billfold has the soft velvety feel you find only in select quality Leather. Your choice of Emblems and Initials are beautifully embossed in 23 karat gold on the face of the Billfold. Due to difficulty in obtaining choice leather because of war conditions, the supply of these Billfolds is limited. Remember if you send your order promptly, we will include absolutely FREE, a beautiful Identification Key Tag and Gift Chain to match, all hand engraved with your Name, Address, City and State. If after receiving your Billfold and Free Gift, you don't positively agree that this is the most outstanding bargain you have ever come across, return them to us and your money will be cheerfully refunded in full. Send your order today, without fail, so you won't be disappointed.

Rush This Coupon For This Once-In-A-Lifetime Bargain!

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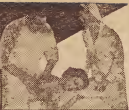
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THE TAKEOFF

(Continued from page 8)

certain Nipponese Zero pilot who had shot down his brother a few days earlier. But his orders were not to engage in combat until his squadron had solved the secret of hundreds of square miles of suspiciously quiet jungle between the American and Japanese positions.

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Norman A. Daniels is present with another of his fine novelets, "Workhorse," the story of Lieutenant Ben Mason and a slow-moving Grumman amphibian. Ben was one of those selfish young fools who resented the fact that he'd been kept at home training other recruits instead of being given a Wildcat or Corsair and turned loose to win glory.

When he was assigned to fly the old Grumman reconnaissance plane off a carrier in the Pacific, it seemed like the final straw—but in the course of a task force action against a Jap-owned island group, Ben learned that there is a lot more to a war than just firing popguns at the foe. How he learned it is Daniels' story, and he tells it well.

For the rest, the issue will contain a full quota of short stories, up-to-the-minute articles and features. See you then!

—THE EDITOR.

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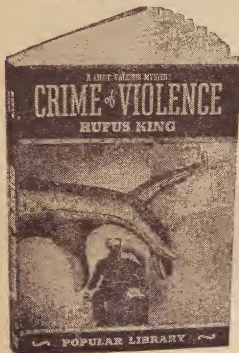


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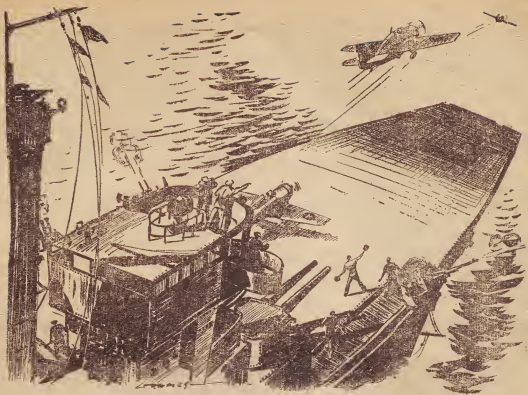
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One by one the Grumman's hurtled into the morning skies and formed into flights

FLAT-TOP PATROL

By F. E. RECHNITZER

Suspected of negligence and treachery, Pilot Reginald Niebling battles to vindicate himself in a welter of furious action amid blasting bombs and flaming gunfire!

CHAPTER I

Rich Man's Son

THE sun was sinking below the rim of the world. The undulating expanse of the Pacific, broken only by the carrier's screen of three destroyers and a cruiser, stretched from horizon to horizon. With the purple shadows lengthening across the flight

deck it was the time of day the men liked best. It meant not only a lessening of the terrific heat but a welcome respite from staring into the burnished skies, ever on the alert for Jap bombers or torpedo jobs. And on this particular evening, their fifth out of Pearl Harbor, there was fun in the offing. For around two bells the flat-top would slip across the Line.

A COMPLETE AIRCRAFT CARRIER NOVELET

The Shellbacks were grinning about what they would do to the Pollywogs that night. And the Pollywogs, the lads who had never crossed the equator or bent a knee to Father Neptune, were more worried about the coming hazing than the possibility of being jumped by a Jap squadron. The preliminary ceremonies had already taken place. Every Pollywog, whether officer or seaman was tagged, and the Shellbacks were smacking their lips in anticipation. For an hour or so they were determined to forget about the war.

A group of pilots sat with their backs against the gray bulkheads of the island. They stopped talking as the plane handlers hurried to their positions on the walkway surrounding the flight deck. Above them on the wing of the bridge the Old Man had given the order to bring the big ship into the wind.

Despite her twenty knots the carrier seemed to lumber through the lazy swells. The landing officer had already taken his station at the stern, ready to wave the returning planes in for a landing. The fabric strips in the wire loop of his signal paddles fluttered in the breeze. The fire fighters stood at their stations, like men from Mars in their heavy asbestos uniforms.

"There they come," Ensign Harper said casually. He nodded toward the knifelike silhouettes darting out of the purpling shadows to the east.

As they turned to watch the flight of Avengers line up to come in, a lad, dressed in summer whites, stepped out on deck.

Ensign Harper nudged his neighbor and nodded toward the newcomer. "Finally crawled out of sick bay," he whispered. "Pipe his nice new uniform. Fresh out of a box from Brooks Brothers. Came aboard while you were on patrol off Diamond Head, Pete."

Quickly the pilot named Pete Gill glanced over his shoulder at the officer who was watching the first of the Avenger flight being snubbed up short by the arrester gear. "What happened to him?" he inquired.

HARPER smiled. "Got himself a nice dose of sunburn the first day out."

"Oh, one of those," Pete Gill said. "Unfit for duty through personal neglect. Skipper done anything?"

Harper shrugged as he watched the plane handling crew unhook the arrester gear and begin to push the Avenger down the deck toward the elevator. "Understand he's figuring on us taking care of that tonight."

"Is he a Pollywog?"

"Must be," Harper said quickly. "Although I didn't notice his name on the list. Being he was in the sick bay I suppose he thinks he's been overlooked."

Pete Gill grinned widely. He looked up at the stranger and then at Harper. "That'll be a nice detail for Larry Rawlings. He hates a guy who doesn't know how to take care of himself in the sun. Been that way ever since he had to take a TBF out alone because his escort was sick from sunburn. Never got over that. This guy'll be Larry's meat."

The last of the Avengers had been waved in over the stern and were being wheeled along the flight deck. The Grumman Wildcats having had the signal from the bridge banked into position and started to come home to roost.

"Larry's leading that flight, isn't he?" Pete Gill asked.

Harper pointed toward a greenish gray mid-wing job, S-turning above the formation. "That's him. He always waits until everybody's in before he makes his approach."

"Be dark before he gets down," Pete said anxiously.

The signal officer at the stern was busy as an Indian-club-swinging. One by one the stocky little fighters were blurring in over the stern and clattering to a landing on the deck. By the time the last aircraft was making its approach the sun dropped below the horizon. It was just a blurred shadow against the darkening sky to the east.

"He'll never make it," the stranger said loud enough for the others to hear. "He's drifting to starboard."

"A deck pilot," Harper growled, looking up at the new pilot. "Any time Larry Rawlings can't set a ship down on a handkerchief I'll take a bilge water highball with my dinner."

A yell of warning brought Harper and Pete Gill to their feet. Before they could even catch their breath the Wildcat's wheels touched the deck and slewed toward the walkway along the starboard side. The fire fighters were already clumping across the deck with their res-



Rawlings saw the ship was a Grumman Wildcat with a white S 2

cue equipment. With a crash one wheel went over the edge. For a breathless moment the little plane hung poised as if deciding whether to go into the drink or hang on. But even before it had stopped, quivering lines had been thrown across the nose and fuselage anchoring it to the deck.

"I'll order you that highball," the stranger said as Harper and Pete Gill started across the flight deck.

"Nuts!" Harper growled over his shoulder. "But bilge water gives me an idea, Pete," he said turning to his pal.

They reached the Grumman as the pilot crawled across the tilted wing and jumped to the deck.

"You okay, Larry?" Harper asked breathlessly.

The tall, well-built pilot pulled his helmet off and ran his fingers through his blond weather-bleached hair. In the dusk a sheepish grin was visible.

"That'll be a lesson to me," he said slowly. "Knocked down a Kawanishi north of here."

"Congratulations," Pete Gill grinned, extending his hand. "That'll be ten for you. You'll be up for a Gold Star."

Larry Rawlings nodded. "That's just what I was thinking about. Got to thinking about what I'd say to Mom and Jess in my letter. I forgot I had a ship to land, especially with it getting dark."

"Maybe a Gremlin gave your rudder a push," Pete grinned.

"Gremlin, thunder!" Harper smiled. "It was that new pilot. He put the jinx on you while you were making your approach. He's gonna be your meat tonight, Larry. One of your pet sun-dodgers, only this one forgot to dodge. Been in the sick bay ever since we put Diamond Head down."

"One of those," Rawlings said quietly. "But what's this you said about his putting the jinx on me?"

"He called it while you were coming in," Pete Gill replied. "One of these deck pilots."

RAWLINGS nodded. "Seems to know his stuff. Might be able to fill Frank's place."

"Frank?" Harper gasped. "Gosh I forgot to count."

Rawlings nodded soberly as they reached the island. "The rear gunner of the Kawanishi got him.

Harper shook his head sadly. "You can have this guy if you want him. He's a smart Aleck. Listen, you're on the jury tonight, Larry. Give this egg bilge water, will you?"

Rawlings shook his head as they started toward the companionway. "Don't forget, this is supposed to be fun. Why make it personal?"

"Oh, I made a crack about drinking a bilge water highball if you couldn't set her down all right," Harper growled.

"And he took you up, did he?" Rawlings asked wearily.

Harper nodded.

"What's his name?" Rawlings asked.

Harper looked at Pete Gill. They both shrugged. "It's something like Needler," Harper said. "I've been watching for it on the list."

Rawlings shook his head. "I have to report. See you in the mess."

"Don't forget that bilge water," Harper said quickly.

"Called the turn, didn't he?" Rawlings said over his shoulder. "Next time, wait until I'm down before you start popping off."

A wry smile slipped over Harper's face. "Letting a pal down, Larry? Gonna use the old oil to get this smarty pants in your flight. Bet you another glass of bilge water you'll be sorry you ever met this guy."

"That'll make two you're due to drink," Rawlings said as he opened the briefing-room door. "Want me to order a stomach-pump from the surgeon?"

Then the door closed. Harper looked at Pete Gill and grinned. "Ought to have known better. Larry's too square to blame somebody else for his own mistake."

Pete Gill nodded. "Even to help a pal out of a hole. That's why he's one of the best skippers on the ship. Come on. Let's get dressed. Mess call will be sounding soon."

An hour later the men, dressed in summer whites, were seated at the tables in the mess below decks. The Pollywogs were trying to be good-natured about the ragging they were getting from the Shellbacks. Good-natured repartee crackled from table to table like summer static.

As the meal drew to a close a colored messboy stepped up to Harper's place and smiling broadly took a tall tumbler

from a tray and set it before the young ensign.

"With Misstuh Niebling's compliments, suh," he grinned.

Harper's face grew red as he stared open-mouthed at the tumbler of dark liquid with a couple of ice cubes floating in its odorous depths.

"Take it away," his companions chorused, "or drink it," they added.

"See what I mean," Harper growled across the table to Rawlings. "Smart guy, a Pollywog, too. You ought to do something, Larry. This bird'll get out of hand."

Rawlings shrugged. "Long's he fits into my flight I should worry about how you feel about him."

"Then you already have him?" Harper asked.

"Going to see the Old Man this evening," Rawlings said quietly.

The men pushing back the tables interrupted what Harper was about to say. Neptune's Court was being set up at the end of the wardroom.

Lieut. Rawlings arose and went over to join the jury. As he sat down his eyes swept over the Pollywogs who were assembling against the far bulkhead waiting to be brought up for trial. He wondered which of the young pilots was the man Harper had it in for. If someone had courage enough to bait one of the flat-top's veterans he wanted that man in his flight.

One by one the Pollywogs stood before the inquisitor and found themselves tangled in a web of revealing questions. Some tried to be smart and were promptly stepped upon. Sentence was imposed and the next victim called to state his case.

"Ensign Niebling, face the court," the skipper of the flat-top bellowed.

Rawlings watched the young naval officer detach himself from the Pollywogs and walk confidently across the wardroom. "I'm afraid there has been some mistake, sir," Ensign Niebling told him with a smile.

"Mistake!" roared the inquisitor. "The only mistake I can see is your being permitted to join the Navy."

"But you see, I've crossed the Line," Niebling persisted. "Three times in fact."

"You have your papers?" the inquisitor asked quickly.

The young ensign shook his head. "I was ordered to sea duty so quickly I forgot to bring them."

The Shellbacks groaned in derision.

The inquisitor leaned across the table and glared at the unflinching officer. "Now I know a mistake has been made. We need men who can think fast in this game, not one who uses the oldest excuse to escape his just dues. So you forgot to bring your papers, Ensign Niebling?"

Niebling nodded. "I left them on the yacht."

"Yacht?" the inquisitor exploded. "So you have a yacht, too. Brought it along I suppose?"

"No, sir," Niebling said quietly. "I lent it to the Navy for the duration. She's doing coastal patrol back East. Got a couple of U-boats I hear."

THE inquisitor's eyes widened. Rawlings' did, too. "Could you by any chance be the Reginald Niebling?"

"My name is Reginald Niebling Two, sir," the ensign replied. "But about being the Reginald Niebling, I suppose you refer to my Father who died last year."

"May I ask a question?" Rawlings said, leaning forward. His voice was hard, brittle, his eyes narrowed as he held those of the ensign.

The inquisitor nodded.

"This yacht," Rawlings asked. "What's its name?"

Niebling faced his new questioner.

"The *Sea Urchin*," he said as he turned toward his questioner.

Rawlings' face went white. He gripped the arm of his chair as he glared at the man standing before the table. Slowly he pushed himself out of the chair.

"I would like to be excused, sir," he said turning to the commander. "I would also like to suggest that Lieutenant Harper pronounce sentence."

A ripple of excited conversation swept through the wardroom as Rawlings walked toward the door. Harper nudged Pete Gill and grinned. Ensign Niebling waited until the judge had called for silence.

"Would I be out of order if I asked the name of the officer who just left?" Niebling asked the inquisitor.

"Lieutenant Rawlings," the inquisitor replied. "And may I ask what this is all about?"

Ensign Niebling shrugged as he glanced at the door through which Rawlings had disappeared. Then he turned back to the table. His lips firmed in a straight hard line. He hesitated before speaking.

"As I stated I forgot my papers," he said. "I am prepared to take the consequences." A slow smile lighted his face. "And I have a hunch part of my penalty will have to do with bilge water."

"I will confer with Lieutenant Harper," the inquisitor said slowly, sensing some underlying current of conflict between the two men. "I will send you the court's disposition."

"Do I have your permission to be excused, sir?" Niebling asked.

The inquisitor glanced at the commander and then nodded.

Niebling stepped away from the table and hurried through the door. He reached the moon-flooded flight deck. Save for the ever alert gun crews the deck was deserted. As he started toward the front of the island a figure stepped out of the shadows.

"I've been waiting a long time to meet you, Niebling," Rawlings said. "Ever since you killed my Father."

CHAPTER II

Treachery in the Air

REGINALD NIEBLING moved closer to Rawlings.

"I've been looking for you, too," he said. "I didn't know you were on board or I would have looked you up. I just got out of sick bay. I know you don't understand. You were out here on duty and only knew the newspaper angle. They've been riding my Father for years and now they're taking it out on me."

"Nuts!" Rawlings growled. "You not only ran down my Father while he was out tending to his lobster pots, but your slimy lawyers talked my Mother into signing off for a mere thousand bucks."

"They took that action without consulting me," Niebling explained. "I raised the devil when I found it out."

"Yeah, I suppose a thousand was too much," sneered Rawlings. "Because you inherited your old man's dough and posi-

tion I suppose you think you can ride rough shod over everybody like he did. You're one of these rich playboys who think money'll buy anything. All your millions wouldn't replace my Father."

"But didn't you receive Jess' last letter?" Niebling inquired.

"Miss Rawlings to you, Mister," Rawlings snapped. "And now I'm going to keep a promise I made myself when I heard about what you did to my Father—how you'd run him down and then sailed away laughing."

Niebling started to stay something when Lieut. Rawlings' fists lashed out. The first blow caught him full on the lips. The second smacked against his left eye as he tried to dodge. He staggered backward, and fell.

"If you want more, stand up," Rawlings said.

Niebling spat through his bloody lips and sat erect. He glanced around the deck to see if anyone had noticed.

"You'll find out you've made a mistake," he mumbled through his already puffed lips.

"Gonna get up and take some more?" Rawlings snarled as he rubbed his knuckles.

Niebling shook his head.

"Yellow like all these rich playboys," Rawlings said huskily. "Gosh knows why I used to envy you guys when I was a kid. But in those days I didn't know money couldn't make a man. To think I had an idea you could take Frank's place!"

Rawlings took another look at the man sitting against the bulkhead wiping his bloody lips, then turned and went below.

Ensign Niebling, dressed in one of the fire fighters' asbestos suits minus the helmet, carrying a broad umbrella in one hand and a tray in the other walked around the busy deck of the flat-top. Every now and then he approached an officer who hailed him and held the tray bearing a glass of bilge water toward him.

"You first," the officer would grin and walk away. And Niebling, following the orders of the court would hold the glass to his lips. He did not have to drink, the mere smell was enough to make a man feel ill.

Harper and Pete Gill who had just come up from breakfast walked to the shadow of the island and stood watching

the grotesque figure move slowly around the deck.

"An artistic bit of work," Pete Gill smiled. "That asbestos suit will make him remember sunburn for a long time."

"Where'd he collect the shiner?" Harper asked.

"Hey, you!" Pete Gill called as Niebling passed.

"Yes, sir," Niebling smiled and held the tray toward the two men.

"Where'd you get the black eye and busted lips?" Pete Gill asked.

"Well, you see," Niebling said without a smile. "I was looking down the barrel of a fifty caliber to see if it was clean, and it went off. Like to have knocked my head off." He held the glass to his mouth, and held his breath, too.

"Okay, wise guy," Harper growled. "If you're not careful you'll find yourself drinking that stuff. Carry on."

"Yes, sir," Niebling said quietly. He put the glass down and moved away.

"Seems to be a good sport about it," Pete said.

"Yeah, too good," Harper muttered. "I'm always cagey about these guys who take things quietly. He looks like he's doing a lot of thinking."

"Good flier, they say," Gill remarked. "Did a couple of landings at dawn, smooth as silk. Been assigned to Lieutenant Farnsworth's flight."

"Look, Pete," Harper hissed. He nodded toward Larry Rawlings. "Pipe that left mitt of his."

PETE GILL whistled softly and was about to speak when the speakers on the deck sounded the alarm. The duty pilots made a rush for the ready room.

"Land based E.A. at fifteen thousand, bearing one-forty, fifty miles," the talker said as they settled themselves. "Pursuits and TBs."

In a few moments maps had been checked, courses taken and they were hurrying back on deck where the motors were already thundering their final check.

One by one the Grummans hurtled into the morning skies and formed into flights. Out there, in the cloud-flecked Pacific skies, Jap bandits were roaring toward the aircraft carrier to spear it with their deadly tin fish. The torpedo-carrying crates were the ones to be stopped in spite of the screen of Zeros.

"Did he come along, Pete?" Harper called over the radio.

"Sitting up there in Skipper Farnsworth's flight, wing man," Pete called.

"Shut up, you guys," Rawlings ordered from his position at the head of the flight. "Here they come."

One moment the skies over the Pacific had been clear and peaceful. The next they were criss-crossed by smoking lines of tracer and snarling shells from cannon guns.

Rawlings was taking his flight down on the torpedo jobs while Farnsworth threw his men in at the Zeros. Stuff was being tossed around the heavens as if an army of steel workers were throwing red-hot rivets.

The Japs, in an attempt to force a way for the torpedo-carrying jobs, came down to attack A flight.

"Concentrate on torpedo craft," Rawlings ordered. "Don't let a single one through. Old Man'll have our hide for shoe laces if we do."

[Turn page]



"THAT'S FOR ME FOR ENERGY"



Like gad-flies buzzing around a herd of cows the Wildcats rammed into the torpedo planes.

Rawlings caught a yellow and green striped job in his sights and pressed the button. His guns woke up. A Jap in the rear turret of the TB tried to mute his guns. Red tracer was streaking past his wings like red rods of flame. Another Zero popped out of a creamy white cloud and let fly. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Harper and his side-kick, Pete Gill, swinging in to take care of this second Zero. Rawlings put his ship in a left turn and came around in time to see Pete Gill's ship going down, unraveling a cloud of smoke that hung like an exclamation point in the air.

Kicking rudder again, he caught the Zero, let it have a quick burst and sent it spinning into the sea.

"Did Pete hit the silk?" he called to Harper.

But before he could get an answer he felt slugs thumping into his own fuselage. His feet danced on the rudder as he fought to free himself from the web of death.

A Zero streaked past him and burst into a mass of yellow flame. The sky seemed to be filled with the swift little jobs that carried a red disk on their wings. And they were not all burning. At the moment he wished they were.

Behind him he could hear the rattle of guns. To his left he saw Harper's plane, half-rolling to shake off a Zero. Then another Wildcat twisted by like a falling leaf. This time he saw the pilot spill out and pop his chute. It was one of Farnsworth's flight by the markings on the fuselage.

Twisting and turning, he tried every trick to shake off the pilot who held him pinned with those blazing darts.

For a moment it looked as if the TBs were going to win through to the carrier.

"Farnsworth, Farnsworth!" he called. "Head those yellow monkeys off."

Slugs were skewering his wings. Dural leaped away in jagged strips. He watched the dotted line move slowly toward the fuselage. The sight brought a cool ooze of sweat out on his face. He had met Japs before, but never one who flew like this one.

THEN he saw Harper's ship come zooming out of the blue. He hoped

he would cut his way. But instead a pair of Zeros were coming up with him.

"I'll at least clear that detail," Rawlings growled as he kicked rudder savagely and threw the stick over. His own guns opened up. He took a deflection shot at the Jap, saw his tracer streak across the Zero's course and then curl right into the rounded nose. The Zero staggered and then disintegrated in a mass of flaming debris. The other Jap curled away leaving Harper room to swing in on his own level.

And strangely enough, as Harper banked around, the man behind him stopped his sniping. Without waiting to see what Harper's motions meant, Rawlings cut into a steep bank and came around in time to see a Wildcat veer away.

His eyes narrowed. His feet dug madly at the rudder. Coming around, he scanned the skies and then cursed. The only ship near him at the moment was the Grumman.

"Jumping jalopies," he snarled. "I'm getting punch drunk. Harper—Harper!" he yelled. "Watch that ship coming in behind you."

"Why?" Harper called back. "It's our friend Niebling. Oops, there's a little Japanazi."

Rawlings saw Harper go down on the Zero with guns blazing. He threw a quick glance at the Grumman and then pushed his stick forward. Farnsworth and his men were right below him pounding the struts out of the TB jobs.

For a few wild moments Grummans tangled with the Japanese torpedo planes, sending them plummeting into the sea one by one, well salted by flaming Zeros.

A couple of Japs got through only to run head-on into a barrage of ack-ack fire from the flat-top. Soon the little boys from Tokio had had enough and those that were left began to hightail it toward the west.

"Okay, fellows," Rawlings called to his flight. "Form up."

He heard Farnsworth giving the same order to his flight.

The Grummans broke off from their pursuit of the fleeing Japs and swung into position. On the way back the pilots totaled their score, and despite the odds, the score was more than good.

"Did you see whether Pete Gill bailed

out?" Rawlings asked as they approached the carrier.

"No," Harper answered sadly. "I didn't see it happen. Just caught a glimpse of the markings and knew it was him. Guess he never had a chance."

The landing officer waved them in. The plane handlers wheeled the Wildcats away for refueling and a check for damages sustained in the battle. The pilots went below to make their reports.

"Pete Gill and Hultz were shot down," Harper said as the Intelligence officer was getting his report.

"Anybody see Niebling go down?" Farnsworth turned and asked.

Rawlings bit his lip. He was about to speak when one of Farnsworth's flight spoke up.

"I saw him head west with three of the Zeros," the pilot said quietly. "Didn't seem to want to break off."

JUST then the telephone rang. The officer answered and then looked up at Rawlings. "You're wanted on deck, Rawlings."

"You made your report, Harper?" he asked. "If you have, come on. I have something I want to tell you."

When they reached the deck a man from the handling crew met them. "The gunnery officer has something to show you, sir."

"Lead the way," Rawlings said quietly.

"Here's something I think you ought to see," the lieutenant said as they reached Rawlings' plane. He pointed to the holes in the fuselage and the jagged tears in the wing.

"Holy smoke!" Harper exclaimed. "They're painting their slugs so in case they have an argument about who got a ship, the smudge of paint around the hole will match with the paint on the bullet. Just like we do in sleeve target practice."

"That it, Lieutenant?" Rawlings asked steadily.

A grim smile crossed the officer's face. "It might be, but I had another reason for calling this to your attention. Ensign Niebling's belts had been treated. He was slated for sleeve target practice this afternoon."

"And this matches the paint you dipped his bullets in?" Rawlings said pointing to the smudge of bright blue

paint around the edges of the bullet-holes.

The officer nodded.

"I didn't want to say anything until you had seen it, especially since this was his first flight," he explained. "Thought perhaps he might have become a bit excited. I'd hate to spoil his chances."

"You won't," Rawlings said quickly. "Ensign Niebling didn't come back this morning."

The officer looked startled. "Why, I'm sorry to hear that. Would you suggest that I fixed those up without saying anything about it?"

"I think that would be best, Bowen," Rawlings said. "Have those smudges wiped off before the men start talking."

"Very well." The officer shook his head slowly as he watched Rawlings and Harper walk away.

"What's all this about?" Harper asked when they were alone.

"I don't know, Harper," Rawlings said as he stood watching the sky to the west. "Darned if I do."

"But this business of Niebling shooting you up," persisted Harper.

Rawlings shrugged his shoulders. "Remember when I yelled to you up there?"

"Something about a ship getting on my tail," Harper smiled. "But that was Niebling. I recognized his markings. That's why I didn't pay any attention to him. Listen, Larry, you're not trying to tell me . . ."

Rawlings nodded. "He just got through shooting me up. I turned in time to see him break off."

Harper hesitated. He glanced down at the skinned knuckles on Rawlings' left hand.

"It's none of my business, Larry, but you slugged him last night, didn't you?" said Harper.

Rawlings nodded grimly.

Harper watched his friend's face. "He was the guy that ran down your father, wasn't he? Remember seeing something about it in the papers."

Two of the men from Farnsworth's flight came along, just as Rawlings was about to answer. "Did you see Pete knocked down?" one of them asked.

Both Rawlings and Harper shook their heads. "Did you?" Rawlings said, after a moment, almost as if he had been afraid to ask the question.

"A Wildcat got him," the pilot said. "Do you understand me? A Wildcat blasted Pete to bloody tatters up there."

"Did you catch the markings?" Rawlings inquired.

"S-Two," the pilot growled. "Oh, you needn't seem so surprised. I saw him on your tail also. I came up to tell you you're wanted in the Old Man's cabin. The Intelligence officer is waiting there, too. I've reported, so you might as well tell them everything you know. Better tell them about last night, too."

"Last night?" Rawlings asked softly.

"Yeah," the pilot smiled grimly.

"Somebody saw you slug this bird Niebling. Maybe that's the answer to this morning."

As Rawlings and Harper walked away, Harper suddenly stopped and shook his head.

"Listen, Larry, maybe that guy's a spoiled brat an' all that, but I don't think he'd be low enough to shoot down Pete because he was your friend, or even you."

The skin was taut across Rawlings' cheek-bones. He chewed his lower lip a moment and then turned to his friend. "Looks screwy. Don't forget, he was all ready to make a pass at you. And then to top it he was last seen hustling off with these Japs."

"But, good grief, Larry," Harper exploded. "He was a white man. No matter how much he hated us, he wouldn't have any truck with those yellow monkeys."

"You only know what you read in the papers," Rawlings said. "But I come from Maine. They had a summer place up there. I heard lots about them."

"Meaning?"

"That his mother was nuts about Japan," Rawlings said. "Wrote articles for the culture magazines about what a beautiful country it was and how kind and hospitable the people were. He was practically raised in Japan. Didn't come back here until he was ready to go to college. Except during the last couple of years only the old man came to their place in Maine."

Harper whistled softly and shook his head. "Then you think that's the angle?"

"Other angles," Rawlings said quickly. "But for the moment I'm not talking."

"Okay," Harper said grimly. "Want me to keep what you just said under my hat?"

"I wish you would," Rawlings said.

CHAPTER III

Japanese Lair

IT WAS still dark. But the deck of the flat-top was busy as the landing strip on a beehive. The planes, some patched, but now repaired and refueled, stood waiting for the signal from the bridge. During the night the carrier had crept close to the Jap base and at dawn was going to demonstrate how a surprise attack should be carried out. The attack force was to consist of a flight of dive bombers screened by Wildcats, while upstairs would sit four scout bombers ready to finish anything the others started.

The pilots and gunners were in the ready room copying their navigation information from the blackboard and listening tensely for the talker to give them the word.

"This is the sort of show Pete always wanted to get in on," Harper said quietly. "If he had to go I know he'd rather have got it while giving the Japs merry Columbia than—"

"Go ahead," Rawlings muttered. "You mean at the hands of a man he thought was one of us."

"That guy rubbed me the wrong way," Harper growled. "But darned if I can bring myself to accuse him of murder. . . . I'm sorry, Larry, I didn't mean that last."

"Skip it. Have you any ideas why he couldn't have done this?"

"That's the tough part," Harper said. "I can't think of a thing except he's an American."

"That's not enough," Rawlings retorted. "We've got some Americans who take a darn funny way of showing their patriotism. But if you do get any ideas, let me know. I'd be glad to hear them. By the way, didn't a new destroyer join us last night?"

"Yeah," Harper said. "Brought quite a load of mail."

"That's why I asked. Any for me?"

"Haven't seen any."

Just then the Talker gave them the nod. The pilots spilled from the ready room like a football team going out into the sunlight of a stadium.

As Rawlings was getting into a ship,

put at his disposal by one of the other flights, a messboy came up.

"Letter for you, Lieutenant," he announced.

Rawlings switched his cockpit light on, saw that the letter was from his sister Jess and then snapped the light off. Letters would have to come later. Right now there was other business to attend to.

The dive bombers were already in the air getting a start over the faster pursuits. The SBs were climbing up there somewhere in the darkened skies. Far behind the flat-top, the dawn was smearing the sky with rose.

Then as the water at the rim of the world became opalescent the Wildcats with Larry Rawlings in the lead streaked down the deck and one by one leaped into the air. Ahead of them the moon was lowering in the west.

There was no talking between the pilots now. The only sound was the steady throb of the motors. Somewhere ahead lay an island base from which the Japs were launching their murderous attacks.

Much depended on this job. The safety of the United States Fleet on its way south was at stake. Not only the fleet, but the brave Yanks on Guadalcanal were jeopardized by the Nipponese planes flying in all directions from the base.

At fifteen thousand feet the planes from the carrier flew through the rushing dawn. The moon was already sinking below the distant horizon.

"We are attacking," Rawlings heard a voice through the phones. And before the voice of Bombing Nine's leader had died away the air was stippled by crackling archie.

The light of the new day was strengthened by the flash of bombs exploding on the little island where the Jap squadrons had their lair. A sheet of flame mushroomed from the palm-fringed beach and lifted toward the skies, crowned by a coronet of oily black smoke.

"Nice hit," Rawlings muttered as he glanced around at the exhaust flares of his flight. "Okay, boys, this is it. Can't do anything about the ack-ack, but we can keep the Zeros away. On your toes."

ANOTHER pillar of smoke and flame marked another hit by the boys of Bombing Nine. The flames lit up the skeleton of a burning hangar close to the

shore. A big Kawanishi flying boat was adding fuel to the fire. And revealed by the mounting flame, Rawlings saw Zeros bobbing along the runways and leaping into the air to meet the attack.

"Here we go," he shouted. His throat mike picked up the sound, passed it through the transmitter and out into the roiled morning air. "Don't let them get up here."

Slamming his stick forward he went down in a screaming dive to catch the first of the climbing Zeros. His tracer held fast for a minute only to be lost in a flaring mass of orange flame.

"Scratch another Nippo," he laughed. "That one was for Pete."

"I downed one for him, too," he heard Harper's answer come winging out of the dawn.

He cut across the far end of the field and then banked. At the end of the air-drome the pilots and gunners of Bombing Nine were lathering the installations with high explosive and incendiary bombs. They were doing a grand job. They were picking their targets by the light of the flame and going in low to drop their stuff. With dawn rushing out of the east they had to work fast.

"Nice shooting," he cried when a Zero streaked by him and exploded just before it struck the ground. "Get—"

His words were lost in the nerve-shattering sound of slugs hitting his ship. He tried to bank away, but it was like the day before. The man behind him was staying along. It sounded like hail on a tin roof the way the man on his tail was pouring it into him. But he had learned his lesson the day before. Trying to fight it out with a Zero in the hands of a pilot as skilful as this one, was suicide.

With a curse he jammed the throttle full on and shoved the stick forward. The little Grumman answered like the wildcat she was. Behind him he heard the steady chatter of guns. And then he suddenly realized they did not sound like Jap guns. It was the same barking roar he had heard the day before.

Forgetting everything he lifted the Wildcat in a wild stomach-constricting zoom. The tracer was going over his wings now. They stopped for a moment. And in that split second he thought he had escaped the murderous fire. Up and up he went, higher and higher into the paling heavens. Far behind him he heard

the faint sound of angry guns.

Then as he leveled out to come around, he noticed that his instrument panel was suddenly growing dim. Another sound like rattling paper came to his ears. A red glow reflected on his port wing. It was getting hot, too. He threw back the hatch to suck in a lungful of cool air, only to be met by a billowing cloud of acrid smoke.

He fumbled with the catch on his safety belt as he gasped for air. The whole sky seemed to be red now. He could not tell whether it was from his burning plane or from the fires below. He was about to roll the Wildcat over on its back and drop out when a bellowing roar attracted his attention. Across his path flashed a plane. It was like an airplane crossing a motion picture screen. One minute it was there, the next it was gone. But in that fleeting moment he had a full view of the ship. It was a Grumman Wildcat and on its fuselage was a big white S-2.

"Blast his soul!" Rawlings cried. "He got me this time."

The plane was gone. In its thunderous wake he could hear the crashing chorus of guns. And he knew another unsuspecting pilot from the flat-top was fighting for his life.

Rolling his stricken ship over, Rawlings let go. He dropped away into the dawn with his right hand clutching the ring. He wanted plenty of space between himself and the burning ship before he cracked his silk. As he whirled through space he caught a glimpse of the ship. A sheet of flame poured along its fuselage. It was heading across the little island and out to sea.

Then he yanked the ring. The silk fluttered above him. Then with a terrific yank it bloomed. As he tugged on the raisers to stop its swing he saw his flaming ship begin to curve toward the sea in a flaming arc. A cascade of sparks and then it was gone.

SUSPENDED there, far to the south of the blazing hangars, he looked down at a thick blotch on the island and knew he was over a tangle of trees. He had fallen free so far, to escape tangling with the burning ship, but there was no chance to slip toward a clearing. He crossed his legs and waited, wondering whether the Japs had seen him.

A few moments later he slipped, almost silently, through the towering fronds of a grove of coconut trees and thumped to a landing on the ground.

"That's one break," he muttered as the folds of the chute settled around him. "Won't have it hanging up in a tree like a flag to show them I got down."

Gathering the chute into a tight bundle he sat down in the darkness to wait the coming of light. When day finally arrived he pushed the chute into a tangle of underbrush and covered it with dead palm branches.

"Now what?" he asked himself. "Will I stay here or have a look-see."

There was not much choice. If he waited for darkness to come again he would have to travel blind. In the light of day he would stand a fifty-fifty chance of seeing a Jap first. He slipped off his shoes, tossed them in with his chute and started through the jungle.

A half hour later he found a trail. He studied it carefully and finally decided it had only been used by natives, and that some time ago.

Traveling very cautiously, always on the alert lest he step on a dead branch or start a stone rolling, he followed the trail toward the east. Somewhere ahead of him lay the Jap base. Two or three times as he skirted a clearing he had been able to mark his course by the columns of smoke from the blasted hangars.

Then toward mid-afternoon he reached the top of a small knoll. He lay down and parted the tangle of leafy vines. And there not more than a hundred yards away, was the Jap field, or what Bomber Nine had left of the field. Only one hangar remained intact. The others were still smoking skeletons. Scattered around the airdrome were the wrecks of planes. At the near end the Japs had gathered the few that had escaped the holocaust. And one of the planes standing there was a Grumman Wildcat with a white S-2 on its fuselage.

Rawlings' eyes narrowed. His lips curled back in a sneer of hate.

"I'll get that ship if it's the last thing I do," he growled. "It's slinking, murderous pilot, too. Up to know I've been killing because it's my job. But now it's hate. I want to kill. Never felt like this before. I'll tear him apart with my bare hands, the sneaky murderer."

Fighting his impatience he lay in his

hiding place and watched the Japs clearing up the wreckage. He studied the layout of the remaining buildings until he knew their location by heart. He was anxious now for night to come.

Then when the sun had sunk over the tree-tops behind him and the purple shadows had deepened across the field he slipped from his hiding place and began to work his way toward the field.

It was pitch dark by the time he reached it and began to worm his way toward one of the shacks at the edge of the field. As he neared it he spotted a ray of light coming through a tear in a blackout curtain shielding one of the windows. He crept toward the window, and when he was in the deeper shadow of the shack he cautiously raised himself and looked into the room.

He bit his lip to smother the exclamation of surprise that welled to his lips.

"The dirty rat!" he snarled to himself. "Let me get my hands on him, just once that's all I ask."

He pressed himself closer to the window. Through the tear in the curtain he had a full view of the interior of the shack. There, at a table, was a bespectacled Japanese officer, eating and grinning as he talked to the man who sat across from him. But it was not the buck-toothed Jap who annoyed Rawlings. It was his companion. For the man was Reginald Niebling. Niebling was laughing and chatting, and to make matters worse, the conversation was in Japanese.

RAWLINGS fought to control his feelings. He wanted to rush into the room and finish the job he had started back on the carrier. There had been a doubt in his mind that morning when he returned to the flight deck. Now that doubt was swept away by the scene unfolding before him.

He pressed close, hoping Niebling might forget himself for a moment and speak English. But every bit of the conversation was being carried on in the language of the grinning yellow man.

The sound of footsteps made Rawlings scurry for cover. He heard someone approach the hut, the squeak of a door, then silence. A few moments later the door opened again and he saw two shadowy figures walk toward the remaining planes.

He was about to follow them, but just to make certain the coast was clear, he glanced around him. He was thankful that he did, for silhouetted against the star-lit sky he saw the figure of a man. He looked from the figure to the hut. The light had been extinguished. When he looked back the man was gone.

"That's queer," he murmured. "Swear I saw somebody there."

He crept out of the shadows and looked up and down the row of shacks. There was no one in sight.

"I'll have a look at the back," he decided. He turned in time to see somebody loom in front of him. Instinctively he ducked. For a terrible second the stars seemed to gather in a single cluster before his eyes and then exploded in one awful flare of light. He staggered, dropped to one knee and tried to shield his face as his attacker rushed at him trying to grip his throat.

"You dirty Jap," the man gasped. "I'll tear your heart out."

"I'm no Jap," Rawlings cried.

The flailing fists fell away from him. He lurched forward on the offensive now, his hands reaching eagerly in the dark. He was not taking any chances.

"Easy—easy, buddy," somebody cautioned from the shadows. "Take it easy. I'm a Yank, too."

Rawlings braced himself expecting a trick although the voice from the shadows did not sound like that of a Jap.

"Who are you?" he whispered.

"I'm a pilot," the man in the shadows answered cautiously. "They knocked me down yesterday morning."

Rawlings started.

"You weren't flying a Grumman marked S-2, were you?" His fist closed tightly as he waited for the answer.

"Did you see it?" the man demanded. "They have a crate marked like one of ours. Made me so mad I chased him all the way home and was shot down for my trouble. All I want to do is bust up that ship before they can use it again. Will you help me?"

"Are you telling the truth, Niebling?" Rawlings asked.

"Rawlings!" Niebling exclaimed. "Were you over this morning? Boy, did they plaster this place. You scared the rats out of their wits. Man, am I glad I have you to help me on this little detail!"

The tension drained out of Rawlings as he realized the ugly suspicion hate had planted in his heart was false.

"Gosh, Niebling, we all thought it was you."

"Me?" Niebling exclaimed. "Why?"

"That S-2," Rawlings said quietly. "You see I knew about your living in Japan all those years. I couldn't explain it but I thought you had gone haywire. Those articles of your mother's created a bad impression, you know."

"And put her in right with the Japs," Niebling chuckled. "Her real reports went to the American Embassy. If they'd listened to her in Washington, perhaps Pearl Harbor might never have taken place."

"That guy Makita I was talking to in there used to be our chauffeur, one of their secret police. Thought he was pretty smart, too, but he wasn't clever enough for Mother. But you guys taking me for a filthy traitor—that burns me up. We better go somewhere else and gab," thought.

"What about that sentry I saw in there," Rawlings asked.

"He won't bother us, Larry," Niebling said. "He's gone to Nippo heaven. I tried the same trick on you but, thank goodness, I missed my hold."

"You didn't miss entirely," Rawlings said as they moved away. "For a second I thought I'd run into a runaway buzz-saw. I'm still seeing stars."

"Here's the sentry," Niebling said.

"Why bother?" Rawlings asked. "I believe you. Only one thing I'd like to know."

"Shoot."

"What were you doing in the company of that Jap?" Rawlings asked slowly. "And how did you get out?"

"I was giving Makita the old oil," Niebling said as they moved through the trees. "Telling him how clever the Japs were, and getting information. Getting out was easy. You fellows blew the nails out of the shacks this morning."

"And the information?" Rawlings asked.

"They're going out after our ship tomorrow morning," Niebling said. "Gonna pay us back for this morning. Got a two-thousand-pound bomb they plan to plant on her decks. Loading the plane now. What do you say?"

"Think we can?"

"We can try."

"Okay."

"Listen," Niebling said. "Their aircraft carrier the *Soryu* is lying out there. Gonna jump our ship at dawn and, while the attack is on, this bomber is scheduled to slip through and plant the finishing egg."

"Be nice if we could do some planting, instead," Rawlings said trying to hide his excitement. "With you talking Japanese the way you do we might be able to pull it. Won't they be missing you?"

"Makita said good-night when he left," Niebling said. "Informed me with many regrets he would be busy until dawn. We'll lay low until everything's set for the take-off."

"Okay," Rawlings said. He hesitated. "I'm sorry about my thinking you were playing on their side."

"Skip it," Niebling replied. "I hope I can prove you're wrong about the other thing, too. The *Sea Urchin* put over a lifeboat which tried to rescue your father, you know. But we'll let that go until we get back to the carrier. Nothing else is as important as this job."

CHAPTER IV

Scores Are Settled

BOTH men found it a long anxious wait. But at last the twin motors on the bomber broke into life.

"Still game?" Niebling asked.

"What do you think?" Rawlings replied. "You lead. It may be up to you to talk us either out or into this."

"Come on."

They crawled from their hiding place and approached the plane.

"How many Zeros have they got left?" Rawlings asked.

"Two, and the Grumman," Niebling answered. "Steady now."

They saw a man standing at the entrance hatch. Niebling moved forward, spoke swiftly in Japanese as he came up to the guard. There was a scuffle and then Niebling was lifting the Jap through the hatch.

"Come on," he called over his shoulder. "Here's another one on his way to drink *saki* with the dead emperors."

"You work fast," Rawlings said as he assisted in lifting the dead Jap into the plane. "Makes me all the more thankful you missed."

They closed the hatch after them.

"You fly it," Niebling said.

"Think I'm good enough after my exhibition the other night?"

"I'll drink a bilge-water highball if you're not," Niebling laughed. "All I ask is that you circle the field once after you take off. I want to tend to that ship with the S-2 on it. Queer break they should get a ship with the same markings as the one I was flying."

"Got a hunch it once belonged to Tippy Larkins," Rawlings said as he hurried to the control cabin. "We lost him over one of the islands last trip out."

"Quick," Niebling called. "Somebody's coming."

Rawlings dropped into the pilot's seat and kicked the throttles open. By the pale light of approaching dawn he could just make out the hastily repaired runway. By the filled-in bomb craters the Japs had placed lanterns shielded so their light did not show out to sea.

As the bomber began to move he heard shouts, then shots. From the rear gun turret he heard other guns and knew Niebling was answering the challenge. The big ship swayed down the runway and then took to the air. Rawlings held level to pick up speed and then went into a gentle turn bringing the plane back over the field. Tracer was already reaching for him as he roared across with motors at full throttle.

The guns behind him chattered. He slid the panel back and looked out. He could see the red streaks from Niebling's guns tearing into the ground close to the shadowy blotch he knew to be the Grumman with the S-2 on its side. Then the tracer caught the Larkins ship on the ground. They splashed all around the little mid-wing job bathing it in a double stream of fire. And from the way they hit he knew the ship was being plastered by explosive bullets.

A tongue of flame broke out. It grew and then flared up until it enveloped the cowlings.

"You did it," Rawlings cried, his voice filled with excited triumph. "She's done her last dirty job for the rats."

As he came around, dodging to evade the stuff the Japs were throwing at them,

he saw Niebling was still raking the remaining planes with hot slugs. Another ship caught fire, that meant one less to pursue them.

Leveling out, Rawlings tooled the bomber across the silver beach and headed out to sea straight into the rising sun.

A half-hour later Niebling joined him.

"I waited to see if they came after us,"

Niebling said. "Guess they figured it would be too late to bother. Have to warm their motors."

"If you left them a whole plane," Rawlings laughed. "You hosed the whole line. But say, now that we're in the air, how're we going to locate the Soryu?"

"Friendly little Makita told me where she'd be," Niebling smiled. "Even showed me on a map. And here's the map."

"You sure got a lot of information out of him," Rawlings grinned. "You ought to be a Naval Intelligence."

"Figured I was stuck on the island," Niebling said as he studied the map. "He always was a polite and trustful little monkey. Mother wormed a lot of useful information from him. You hold this course and I'll do a little figuring for us. Have a course plotted in a jiffy."

AS RAWLINGS sat behind the wheel he reviewed the events of the past two days. There was still one angle to be explained. He thought about it for a while, trying to figure out the blue smudges of paint around the bullet holes in his plane.

"I have it," he cried suddenly. "Now I know the answer to what has been puzzling me."

"You gone nuts?" Niebling asked looking up from the map.

"It was that spot of blue paint on his trousers," Rawlings said. "It wasn't a smudge, it was a fresh drop. Say, do you know Bowen?"

A frown crossed Niebling's face. He thought a moment and then turned to Rawlings. "There was a Bowen who tangled with my Father on the stock market. Guess he came out the wrong end, lost his shirt. Why?"

"Did he have a son?"

"Yeah, surly brat named Philip."

"That ties the bundle up for delivery," Rawlings grinned. "Phil Bowen is one of our gunnery officers. He smeared that

blue paint on those holes himself."

"What holes and what blue paint?" Niebling demanded.

Then Rawlings explained.

"Philip Bowen saw our rumpus on deck the other night and when I brought my ship back full of holes he figured he'd put you in Dutch, Niebling. Thought he looked kind of startled when I said you were missing. His little game sort of went haywire. Or maybe it was improved."

Niebling sighed.

"Dirty way to get revenge," he said. "Why in thunder is it everybody hates me because my Father happened to be wealthy?"

Rawlings was about to answer when Niebling grabbed his arm and pointed through a hole in the scattered clouds.

"The *Soryu*!" he shouted. "See they're getting the planes ready. Either coming after us, or starting out on the screening attack. Makita said the wireless was knocked out so I guess it is a screening attack unless they managed to repair the transmitter."

Rawlings throttled back. Far below in the early morning light he saw the Jap carrier, its deck cluttered with planes.

"Have to risk a low altitude run," Niebling cautioned. "I'm not sure whether I can work their bomb-sight."

"Okay," Rawlings nodded. "You get into the goldfish bowl and I'll try to put us into position. If they haven't been warned by wireless we'll be okay."

"I hope they haven't," Niebling growled.

"Why?" Rawlings asked.

"Like to pay them back in their own coin. They'll figure we're one of them and let us make an approach. Keep your fingers crossed."

Rawlings nodded. He was holding the big *Nakajima* in a steady glide waiting for the first sign of alarm from the huge carrier. He studied the wind making a feather of the steam beside the flattened funnel. He kicked rudder to allow for drift.

Tensed, every nerve on the alert, he made his approach. One hand on the wheel, the other on the throttles, he came in. The carrier loomed larger and larger. He could see some of the crew standing on deck watching him curiously. A light blinked from the bridge.

Then guns began to toss stuff into the

air at him. He felt the ship lurch and threw the throttles full on. The two Mitsubishi motors coughed and then broke out in a steady roar.

Then the skies seemed to come apart. The *Nakajima* rolled under the impact of the updraft. A dull roar came on the wings of the lifting column of air. He fought to hold the ship under control as a geyser of broken metal and smoke sprang into the air.

Then he brought the bomber under control. He glanced over his shoulder and saw a sheet of flame pouring from a gaping hole in the deck of the Jap carrier.

"A perfect run," Niebling grinned as he crawled out of the bomber's compartment.

"And a perfect shot," Rawlings laughed. "Boy, is she burning! No Japs are going to fly off that deck, not this morning, anyway."

"Or any morning," Niebling said as he pointed to the destroyers coming in alongside the stricken carrier. "Half of the planes are burning now."

RAWLINGS squinted at the distant vessels.

"Think of what that egg would have done to our ship," he said. "Look, she's beginning to list. Sort of a rotten trick, wasn't it?"

"Maybe it'll teach them some manners," Niebling growled. "I'm not feeling sorry for them. But speaking of our ship, we'd better do something about finding her."

"You can read the tags on the dials," Rawlings said, nodding toward the radio compartment behind him. "Get the transmitter warmed up and then take the ship. Maybe I can raise them."

In a few minutes Niebling came back. He took the wheel while Rawlings went back to the radio.

"Rawlings . . . Rawlings calling . . . Rawlings calling . . . Get Harper . . . Get Harper . . . Will identify . . . Get Harper . . . Will identify . . . Rawlings calling . . . Get Harper . . . Will wait five minutes and then come in again. . . ."

He waited five minutes. "Rawlings calling . . . Rawlings calling . . . Harper identify . . . Blue smudges . . . blue smudges . . . bilge water . . . bilge water . . . Acknowledge three dashes and dot . . . acknowledge",

The three dashes and a dot crashed into his earphones. He knew the carrier understood it was really he who was calling and not some Jap trying to fix the carrier's position.

"Scratch one flat-top," Rawlings said. "Am flying Nakajima, five thousand, course one-ten . . . send escort . . . if we locate you will land in sea . . . pick us up . . . will leave transmitter on. Set course by carrier wave . . . Acknowledge please."

Again he heard the answer.

"Okay," he smiled happily.

He went back to the control cabin.

"Keep an eye open for them, Niebling," he said. "They're going to escort us in."

Niebling nodded.

Rawlings sat down in the co-pilot's

me something about a letter from Jess, didn't you?"

Niebling's face sobered. He glanced at Rawlings and nodded.

Rawlings fumbled through his pocket and finally found the letter. It was well crumpled now. He opened the blue envelope and took out the single sheet of paper. He smoothed it carefully on his knee and then read:

Dear Larry:

This is a hurried note. It must be short but I have so much to tell you. First, if you have not already read it in the papers, Reginald was not on the yacht that night. There was a secret conference going on of which they did not wish the Nazis to know. You see it was before our entry into the war and there were high ranking officers of both our Navy and the British Navy on the *Sea Urchin* that night.

Reginald took the blame and the papers

"Coming Right Up, Punk! Coming Right Up, and With Pleasure!"

TUT TUTTLE was readying for combat against The Punk—the most deadly Zero pilot of them all. But he'd been warned not to make it a one-man war—to carry out his mission even if he had to let The Punk escape.

WHAT HAPPENS to Tuttle on the most exciting foray a Yank pilot ever made is told in **LIGHTNING OVER NEW GUINEA**, a smashing action novelet by Robert Sidney Bowen that roars to a bang-up climax on all cylinders!



COMING
NEXT ISSUE

seat and stared through the windshield. He suddenly realized he was weary.

"Sorry I was hasty the other night," he said after a while. "I know now you're on the up and up. Ought to let you take a crack at me."

A broad grin came to Niebling's face. He reached into his pocket and took out a silver cigarette case.

"If it's the shiner you're worrying about, take a look," he said.

Rawlings took the case and glanced into its mirrored surface.

"Holy smoke!" he exclaimed. "Where'd I get that? That's where you popped me last night. No wonder I saw stars. Boy, is that a beaut. Harper'll have me drinking bilge water for sure."

"Did that destroyer come along with the mail?" Niebling asked as Rawlings handed him the case.

"Yeah," Rawlings said. "That reminds me. I have a letter to read. You asked

went after him. Now that we are in the war the true story has been revealed. I do hope you will forgive me for sticking up for him in my letters to you. I did not know the facts at the time, but I trusted him. You did not know it, but Reginald and I have known each other for a long time.

He is in the Navy now and I do hope you will meet, and perhaps fly together, not as enemies, but against our enemy. You see, Larry, Reginald and I are married. We were married just before he left for duty. Mother and I hope to see you soon.

With love,

Jess,

(Mrs. Reginald Niebling.)

RAWLINGS took a deep breath and then exhaled slowly.

"Why in thunder didn't you tell me?" he demanded.

"And get another mouthful of knuckles?" Niebling grinned. "All I remember is saying Jess and, *wham*, a turret gun landed on my puss."

"Will you shake?" Rawlings grinned.

"Put it there, Larry," Niebling smiled. "Look, there they come."

Rawlings looked up and saw them hurtling out of the sky, a flight of Wildcats from the old flat-top. He snatched up the phones and the flap mike in time to hear Harper's excited voice.

"Are you there, Larry?" Harper was calling.

"Right here, kid," Rawlings chuckled. He slid back the panel and waved as Harper banked into position just above them.

"Who's that with you?" Harper demanded.

"Niebling," Rawlings answered.

"Niebling!" Harper cried in astonishment. "What's cooking now?"

"Nothing," Rawlings said. "We just busted up the Soryu and now we want to celebrate a wedding."

"A wedding?" Harper yelped. "Say, has the sun got you, or have you been drinking bilge water, too?"

"He's in the family now," Rawlings grinned. "And speaking of bilge water. Remember that bet you made with me about being sorry if I met this guy Niebling."

Harper was silent a moment. "What about it?" he asked suspiciously.

"Well, you're drinkin' bilge water again, old boy. Be seeing you as soon as they fish us out of the drink."

"Nuts!" Harper growled and then signed off.

*Ben Mason Learns There's a Lot More to War Than Just
Firing Away at the Foe in*

WORKHORSE

By NORMAN A. DANIELS

AN EXCITING COMPLETE NOVELET COMING NEXT ISSUE

**You men with tough beards, tender skin
Don't have to take it on the chin—
Get fast, slick, thrifty shaves each time
With Thin Gillettes, four for a dime!**



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**Easy Way To Get Even
More Shaves With
Every Gillette Blade**



1. WASH FACE thoroughly with hot water and soap to soften beard and eliminate accumulated grit that dulls shaving edges.



2. APPLY CREAM or latherless shaving cream with face is wet. If lather is used, dip your brush in water frequently.



3. TWO EDGES double blade life. Mark indicated shows identical edges, enabling you to give both equal use and get extra shaves.



4. CLEAN BLADE in razor by lathering hands, then rinsing in hot water and shaking. Wiping the blade helps to damage the edges.



Army Air Forces Technical Training Command Photo

CHANUTE FIELD, ILL.—Up goes the pilot balloon! As it soars into the air these weather school students of the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command watch its flight through the sensitive lenses of the theodolite, a telescopic instrument which follows the balloon as it rises. Thus, the student learns about shifting air currents in the higher altitudes and records the data for use in forecasting the weather. Training like this is one of the important steps in turning out skilled weathermen for the Army Air Forces.

WHEN the beaten and bomb-scarred remnants of the Mikado's invasion fleet managed to evade the rain of bombs descending on them from scores of avenging American planes at Midway, it was the weather that saved them from total annihilation. A big bank of low clouds cut off the vision of pursuing observers as effectively as a drawn blind at night shuts off a room from watchers outside.

And the landing and stubborn maintenance of their position in icy Aleutian Kiska by the Japs was made possible only by weather—in this case, an almost year-round series of fogs and storms that makes effective assault by air all but impossible.

HE COUNTS THE CLOUDS

By VANCE PORTER

The Story of the Weather Observer in the USAAF

On the other hand it was again weather in the form of a high riding tail wind that enabled General Jimmy Doolittle's Tokyo bombers to reach the coast of Asia instead of being forced to land in the Jap-patrolled China Sea. Weather is a vital factor in any air operation.

In a high percentage of cases, in fact, weather can be and is the decisive factor in

air war. Knowledge of the weather—in the past, present and future—is a basic element in every air commander's estimate of the situation confronting him.

For that reason, every active Army air operation has its weatherman attached to discover what conditions are aloft before a plane leaves terra firma. Preparing

weather observers is one of the prime tasks of the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command School at Chanute Field, Illinois.

Enlisted men chosen to enter the Weather Observer's School are hand-picked—chosen from hundreds of thousands of men on their educational qualifications and aptitude tests, as are entrants for other Air Forces' technical schools.

An Adroit Science and Art

The study of changes in atmospheric conditions—weather, to the layman—is an adroit combination of science and art. Throughout the weeks of a weather observer's study, he is given a continuous and thorough application of meteorology, the whys and wherefores of changes in atmospheric conditions. Regardless of whether he serves in Alaska, India or Egypt, the fundamental principles of how the weather gets that way remain the same.

However, the weather observer is definitely not a soothsayer. He is *not* concerned with prophesying what the weather is going to be. It is his task to find out what it is and to set down this information in a form that will offer the maximum of usefulness for the forecasters and his commanding officer, as well as to keep a record of what the weather has been—one of the most reliable and informative guides for what it will be.

Observation of present weather is not a matter of glancing casually at the sky above. Ingenious instruments are needed to measure barometric pressure, rainfall, wind speed and direction, temperature, degrees of moisture in the air and the other elements of weather.

Measuring the Atmosphere

The use, repair and care of these instruments forms an important part of a weatherman's training. A barometer in poor condition or incorrectly observed might lead to wrong setting of delicate instruments on the flier's instrument panel, hence to fatal errors in blind flying and landing. Use and care of instruments is therefore vital to an observer's value to his unit.

The pilot is interested not only in the wind and weather immediately above the

ground so important to take-off and landing, but in the upper air where he flies and fights. Weather observers are trained to learn the direction and speed of winds at high levels. This is generally done by sending up pilot balloons and observing their course with a theodolite, a telescopic instrument.

A series of calculations will quickly show the observer how hard the wind is blowing and in what direction at various levels. Such data is invaluable not only to the pilot about to take off, but to the forecaster, who is able to correlate similar reports from other stations in estimating the probabilities of weather at a given point.

More elaborate upper air observations are also taken from instruments sent aloft attached to small balloons, equipped with radio which sends automatically a periodic report on pressures and other conditions at various altitudes. This information is also collected and charted by observers for the information of current operations and forecasters.

Everybody Has a Share

Weather observation is essentially a cooperative undertaking. It is the exchange of information among many points which gives a broad picture of weather conditions over an extended area. Such a picture is of the utmost value not only as a record, but as basic data for the forecaster.

Hence the weather observer is given careful training in transcribing his data in the form of weather maps, the brief coded messages which transmit his findings. Once spread before the forecaster or the commanding officer in the form of an easily-comprehended map, the weather observations of a hundred stations present a mosaic picture of the entire theater of operations.

When conditions permit, weather stations are connected by teletype transmission lines. For this reason, the weather observer is also trained in how to encode his own local report and transmit it over the teletype, as well as how to receive and decode the reports from other stations.

He also learns to transmit the administrative message which pass between stations in the normal course of operation. All this matter, weather reports and ordinary message alike, passes along the

line in code to save time and space, and the observer is taught to translate these codes instantly into English or other codes used to recording and mapping purposes.

What It Was, Is What It Will Be

Complete records are kept at all stations, for knowledge of weather conditions in any locality is cumulative. The more that is known of what the weather has been, the better the estimate that can be made as to what it will be. Keeping such records is the observer's job, and he receives a complete course of instruction in how to do it.

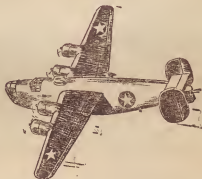
When a plane stands purring on the edge of the runway ready to take off on a mission, its altimeter is set from data on atmospheric pressure obtained by the station's weather observer. The pilot of

the plane—or it may be a hundred planes—take off confident that at 10,000 feet he will find a favoring wind to speed him on his way.

The weather observer's pilot balloon has already determined that the wind was there, two miles up. The pilot knows that his objective will be revealed to him in clear sunlight.

The weather reports that have been received from other stations, decoded and plotted by the observer, have assured him of it.

If the weather observer were wrong, the results could well be disastrous. But Uncle Sam doesn't train him to make mistakes. He plays a big rôle in "keeping 'em flying" and he plays it right, thanks to his training at the Chanute Field branch of the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command Schools.



Marve Logan, American Flyer, Battles Against Nazi Odds to Salvage a Secret Cache of Guns and Ammunition for the Use of Courageous French Underground Fighters in ARMS FOR FRANCE, by STEUART M. EMERY—a Thrill-Packed Novel in September SKY FIGHTERS, 10c Everywhere!



THAT'S FOR ME FOR ENERGY"





The Japs burst over the pit

TEAMWORK IN

CHAPTER I

Wanted—Elbow Room

THE twin "vees" of three ships each were close enough now so that "Bull" McThom could make out the elliptical shape of the wings and the tail sections. He didn't have to see the wing markings of red suns to tell him more.

Zeros! Six nice, fat-nosed, juicy Zeros

boiling along in a tight-knit patrol for a "look-see" at the American-held Fairlee Islands, in the Southern Pacific.

Bull McThom all but jumped against his acrobatic shoulder-belt when his inter-com receiver said flatly:

"The formation six miles to the right, eleven hundred feet above—Zeros! They are Zeros!"

First Lieutenant McThom was used to silence.

Bull McThom Was a Strictly Solo Fighter—



and the Japanese face was no more

THE TROPICS

An Exciting Action Novelet
By WILLIAM O'SULLIVAN

He grunted and blinked his steady, brown eyes. A sour grin creased his tanned cheeks and he hunched his shoulders impatiently.

"Just like Li'l Iceberg," he growled, his eyes shifting to the hatch of the Tomahawk a scant ten feet to his left, and slightly forward. "Leave it to Cary Sellman to contradict me even before I've said anything! 'Five miles, and a thousand feet' would have been my

guess, and the guess of anybody else reasonable. But Li'l Iceberg has got to get his slide rule out and measure 'em off!"

But what really had the newly arrived Bull peeved was not slender, cool, blond Cary Sellman's precise speech nor his precise evaluation of the enemy aircrafts' position—though that did rub a bit against Bull's quicker, heartier methods in things in general. What gripped Bull was something else again.

Until He Came Up Against Real War!

"If only I could get shed of this formation of the Fighting Army Fifth!" he thought.

He raised his eyes and frowned at the Army-marked wingtip that was visible in his rear-vision glass, a wingtip that was jutting dangerously close in the wedge formed by Bull's right wing and the fuselage.

"Here we are, packed in a five-ship formation as close as sardines in a can," he muttered. "And who ever heard of a fighting sardine!"

Bull McThom had come to the Army Air Forces the hard way, and the lonely way. It had been four years ago, when Bull had been a college frosh working his way through, that he'd had the flying bug so bad he had quit school and taken a job as a general helper at a large airport. For pay, Bull had been given a meal and some instruction time in putt-putts—Aeroncas. Nights, he had washed down automobiles and did general duty work in a garage.

THEN had come the time when Bull had his private license; and it had been more of the same while he had bought time in pitifully small doses with mercilessly large doses of work to pay for the time with. It had been lonely. But it had been flying—and worthwhile.

He had looked with envy, though not jealousy, at the kids who had been able to get the money from their parents for flying training. Bull had had to work it the other way around. He'd had to bring money home, instead of taking money out.

So his time had been closely nurtured, around the airports. He had arrived in a hurry, worked himself ruthlessly to get more and more air hours to his credit, and had left again in a hurry to get to his night jobs. There hadn't been any time in such a program for getting acquainted, for shooting the breeze in the hangar, for palling around with the other youths at the ports.

Finally, when he had piled up enough air hours to take his commercial flight check, Bull had been a confirmed lonewolf. Of necessity. And then had come the war.

Pitted against competition of college students, Bull had had to "bone up" on navigation, theory of flight, meteorology and the score of allied and unrelated sub-

jects that make up the chore of a pre-flight cadet in an Army school.

So he had come to live, through the years, as he flew. Alone. Hard at it. Intensely hard at it. But in a vacuum of work so hard, so absorbing, that Bull had not realized there was any other life but the one he followed.

His mates through those years, after several ineffectual attempts to be friendly with the big, clean-cut, good-looking youngster who was Richard "Bull" McThom, had given up their efforts to draw Bull out of himself, to make him one of this or that gang at a port or an Army field.

They had come to know him as a good pilot because the instructors had invariably said:

"McThom is good. A trifle taut, maybe. From anxiety to get all the instructing that there is to get. But he's good."

And they had come to know him as a man who apparently wanted to be alone. In the Army, you invariably get what you go after.

Bull got what he apparently was after—strict solitude.

There were times—the parties in cadet days, when one or another "stage" had been successfully passed, or when one or another of the parents of the other cadets would throw a dance for the lads—there were times when Bull would feel a definite sense of being out of things, of being somehow on the fringe when he wanted to be in the very middle. But before he analyzed his emotions, before he could honestly hunt down in himself the cause of his loneliness, he would be flying again, would be tooling a crate high into the skies, would be exulting in the feeling of space illimitable as far as he could see with his eyes or reach with his whirling propellers.

Then had come Tactical School—the orders to Australia—assignment to the Fighting Fifth—and dissatisfaction.

Thinking of it now, as he feathered his P-40 along with half an eye for his instruments and half an eye for Cary Sellman, his flight leader, Bull had to admit it.

"Heck!" he muttered. "Who ever called this sort of flying, fun? Used to be, I could at least look at the scenery. Now, I can't even take more than a quick slant at the Nips. And if I get intent on

working on a Nip in a dog-fight, and pull clear to get a sock at the slant-eyed beggar, Cary beefs about it!"

WHICH same summation of Captain Sellman's barbed comment anent Bull's quitting his flight, twice before, was understatement. Cary Sellman could look at you with murder in his eyes and hot barbs on his tongue, but calm and controlled, withal.

"This is a game of teamwork," Sellman had said, his blue eyes cold on Bull, after the last flight in which the unhappy Mc-Thom had yanked clear to fight with elbow room at his disposal. "You pull out once more and I'll promise you your death!"

"I gotta have room," Bull had muttered. "Heck, I can't scrap and maneuver with my prop threatening to eat some guy's tail-feathers off. While a third mug has his cowl flaps hot on my collar button!"

Sellman had said, still quietly, but still with icicles dripping at each word:

"You are alleged to be a soldier. A soldier takes orders. You have your orders—to stay with the gang. Savvy?"

"Savvy ain't the word," Bull had retorted. "'Snafu' fits it better. 'Situation normal—all fouled up.'"

"And you'll get fouled up if you try it again!" had been Sellman's last words. Until the next time. Then:

"Well, Bull?" he had snapped. "You pulled clear again, didn't you, despite your orders? What did I tell you about that sort of thing?"

Bull had grinned dourly.

"You promised me murder, or death. You were blame near right, too. Only, it was one of those Japs got the death end of it, not me. Or didn't you see me plug him?"

Sellman's blue eyes had been ice when he had said, steadily:

"I saw you. So did the others in the gang see you, Bull. Others younger than you or me, others with less time and air savvy. So what? So they'll think, 'Huh! Maybe Bull is right! Maybe if I pull out of formation, I can get me a Nip, too. Then what?'"

"They don't have to," Bull had temporized. "They don't have to pull out. Me, I got to. I can't fight with guys packed around me like crates in a hangar."

"How did you find out, Bull?" Sellman had asked coldly. "I didn't know you ever had tried. But remember! I'm boss of this outfit. Better keep in mind that what I say goes."

"All except the part about me being killed," Bull had said. "They haven't got me yet."

Sellman had gazed at the larger man steadily, then had lowered his voice to say:

"I'm responsible for these kids fighting under me, Bull. I'm taking that responsibility seriously. If a single man-jack of the outfit gets into trouble following your example of pulling out of formation, I can personally guarantee you the death you've been so lucky to escape. Get me?"

Bull had stared, open-mouthed.

"Say, Cary," he had said, "that sounds like a threat! Just how do you mean that talk?"

But Sellman had only shrugged easily, nodded his head in cool afterthought, and murmured:

"You and I are—ah—different types, Bull. Entirely. We have different ways of going after what we want. I am used to taking care of my men. Nothing has ever stopped me. Nothing"—Sellman's voice had dropped lower so that he couldn't be overheard—"nothing ever will! Not if I have to kill a man to do it! Think it over, Bull!"

REMEMBERING that statement now, as he hugged Cary's wing, Bull frowned and stared at the silhouette of the man.

"Hanged if I don't think that guy would kill you, at that," he muttered, "if he felt he should—thought it would do the service any good! He's quiet, and calm, but it's the quiet of a lull before a storm, and the calm of—of—"

Bull dropped it there. With a flush. Heck! He had been thinking, "—and the calm of the grave, of death!"

He eased the friction lock on the throttle to change the power-setting of the powerful Allison engine.

"Cary was just jawing, just shooting the breeze," he figured. "Nuts!"

Then Bull sat straight in his pit, his eyes momentarily on the Zeros that were paralleling their course. But to the bad side of the sun for the Japs to know about the Yank gang, as yet.

CHAPTER II

"Stay in Formation"

THE Japs were hauling at easy throttle slightly to the right, were shedding altitude imperceptibly. Bull looked below in a quick whisk of his eyes—and saw.

There, some ten thousand feet below, myriad buglike figures were toiling along a strip of flashing white beach with some heavy object that they completely ringed. To the uninitiated, it was a colony of ants trying to make headway with a large stone. But to Bull's air-wise eyes, it was a detail of maybe a hundred U. S. Marines struggling to get a sand-locked, heavy field-piece under cover of the jungle fringe.

In another second, the Nips in those Zeros would be in a screaming dive, would be raking that beach-head with yammering guns, would be blasting at the cannon with demolition bombs. In another second—

"Skipper to Bulldog Flight! Skipper to Bulldog Flight!" It was Sellman on the inter-com, in their adopted jargon. "We're going in on the Zeros! Pick your ship and let them have it—but stay in formation! Stay—in—formation!"

"That's for me, that last part!" Bull knew.

But he was lost in his work instantly as he swung the stick hard to the right to clear Cary Sellman's right wing when the leader made a swirling turn. The big man glanced fretfully to right and left at the planes that hugged close to him. "Blast this subway riot act!"

He clamped his jaws tight and held his place.

The Zeros were blissfully unaware of the Yank planes that had hugged to the sunward, and thus had escaped detection. The Jap fighters took their time about things, curled far to the right, and then swung left again and started dropping for the human targets below in wing-low peel-offs.

Timing things nicely, Sellman led his Warhawks in a blistering dive that caught the Japs just as they cut their power-plants back to idling for their drop.

"Fan out and pick your ships! Hit hard! Break for altitude as soon as you go past them!" Sellman spoke as coolly through the inter-communication radio as though he were reciting the details of some boring, prosaic episode. "But hold your positions otherwise! Every one of you! Luck, men!"

Bull snatched a look at Bick Farson in the Tomahawk at his right. He growled when he saw Bick hadn't given way much. It restricted Bull, made him hold closer to Sellman than he cared for. Bull figured it was not healthy for Sellman to be so close to Bull's left-wing guns; nor for Bull, himself, so close to Bick's guns. But—

"That's the way Sellman wants it!" Bull muttered, as he sighted on a nearby Jap. "I hope I get the right guy!"

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat.

Tracer streaks slashed the air and Bull grunted his satisfaction when the hammering guns vibrated rhythmically along his muscled shoulders and chest.

He trod his rudder to bring the streaking tracers stitching along a Zero fuselage, twitched his stick measuredly to raise the aim.

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat.

"Got him!" Bull blared. "That makes . . . Hey! What the—"

Tracer blurs were wisping around his own pit, slugs were biting chunks out of the plexiglas hatch. The altimeter was a blasted disc of glass and dial and needle. Bull slanted a look into his rear-vision glass and cursed heartily.

BICK FARSON had swung to the left to follow a zooming Jap with his guns, was even now skidding flatly in that same direction to hold his victim in his sights.

Bull started to pull out, then remembered Cary's warning. He sat tight for a split second, then flicked his stick forward to drop out of Bick's range. A sunburst of flame and flying Zero parts marked finis to Bull's own prey.

The big Yank sighed with relief when he saw a spot into which he could ease to escape Bick's fire and still hold close to Cary. But the hole was plugged instantly by a Jap who had recovered from his first surprise, to execute a daring, reckless Immelmann.

Up in a half-loop, the Zero was coming—up and starting the slow roll that

would bring him in with guns hammering at the three tight-massed front Yank ships in a suicidal attack.

Bull thought friendlily of Cary's instructions.

"I gotta get out, this time!" he thought. And he did.

He twisted his right wing down and trod top rudder to slip out of the Jap's way. Then, when he was scarcely clear, he slammed in on the left rudder and hauled back. The P-40 stood on its haunches like a curveting horse. Bull bore down hard on the gun-trips and held it. The Tomahawk lost speed, but Bull held it up. It stalled slowly, shuddering like a thing alive. Still Bull held it.

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat.

The Jap ship was heeling slowly over on its side, the propeller in the nose of the fighter plane suddenly materializing into full view as Bull's slugs found a home in the engine. For a second that was a lifelong eternity, the toothy Jap pilot had time to twist his head slowly and stare with blank stupefaction at Bull.

Then flames burst back over the pit and the Japanese face was no more.

And then Bull's plane had given its last snarl of defiant power before gravity took over and the P-40 slammed down and around in a tight spin to the left.

Bull calmly closed back his throttle and waited until he had cleared the milling Zeros. Then he sighted on the beach below, saw that during the drop of his plane that the Marines had hit for cover.

He tried the controls against the churning whip of the spin, shook his head slightly, reached out his fingers and tripped the electric toggle-switch alive and dropped his gear. Instantly, the speed of the P-40 slackened. It was in a long, slanting dive that Bull straightened out, scarcely a thousand feet above the cobalt waters.

A plane shot close by, a plume of oily smoke building in the sky behind it. Bull groaned as his eyes followed it to the geyser of sea that it kicked up when it hit.

It was a Tomahawk. One of the Fighting Fifth.

The big Yank pulled up in a zoom and screened his eyes from the sun. There wasn't a Jap ship in sight. But Bull's

heart was heavy. Neither was there an American plane in sight.

"Trouble for me," Bull muttered, as he picked up a landmark and heeled his plane for home. "Cary will get me for this!"

He boiled across the camouflaged tarmac in a clearing of palm trees and swooped, gear-up, to indicate the cleverly screened runway he intended using. Then he whipped over in a climbing turn, moaned his plane at full-low-pitch in a graceful chandelle, and cut back power to drop his gear and flap the P-40 expertly in.

HE KNEW the worst when the tight-eyed dispersal crew came trotting up to take over.

"Report to Headquarters, Lootnent," the crew sarge said flatly. The man eyed Bull curiously. "The skipper's plenty hot about something."

Bull eyed his bullet-scarred ship a silent moment, slid out of his chute harness, and dropped down to the ground to climb aboard the jeep for the ride in.

Bull was relieved to see that, whatever Sellman's rage, the young skipper of the Fighting Fifth had been pleased to handle things without assistance from Wing or Group. On the other hand, it wasn't like Sellman to delegate any punishment of his men elsewhere than to himself. So maybe it wasn't as "thoughtful" of the skipper as Bull had at first judged.

Sellman wasted no time on formalities. "You pulled out again, despite my orders."

"Look," Bull said. "Be reasonable. I've got two parts to play in the outfit. Or any pilot in any outfit has two parts to play. One—follow my skipper's orders. Two—boss my own ship in every respect so that I destroy the enemy, save myself for another duty tour, and return the government property—my ship—intact."

Sellman's blue eyes were hard, his tone matching them.

"Oh. That's your claim, is it? That you had to pull out?"

"Sure, I had to. To get clear of Bick, and to get clear of the Jap, so I could get the brute. Well—I got him."

"And they got Bick," Sellman said, his eyes intent on Bull's. "Bick pulled clear, after you did."

"Maybe he thought it best to," Bull offered.

"Maybe he had to, on account of you," Cary Sellman countered. "Or maybe he figured you were smart in disobeying my orders, so he'd be smart and follow you. At any rate, you moved first. Then Bick moved out. And was killed."

Bull flushed. "Are you suggesting that I'm to blame? If you are, I demand a board of inquiry. I admit that it is almost suicidal to get in the clear by yourself when there are any Zeros around. 'Hit 'em and keep going' is the only way to work against the highly maneuverable Zero."

"But what am I supposed to do when one of my own gang starts shooting up my plane? Or when a Jap comes at me for a headlong collision! Stand there and take it?"

"Are you afraid to?"

"No!" Bull growled. "I'm not afraid to die!"

Sellman held his eyes for a long moment, then pushed back his chair with a grating sound that matched his voice.

"That's good, Bull," he said. "Because you are going to die! I warned you. I told you more than once before. You don't care to be told anything. So that's your choice, and so that's okay with me. Only, don't go down thinking I didn't give you a break, didn't warn you. And—oh, thunder, McThom! I'm through talking. From now on, I'm acting! That's all."

Bull stood his ground, his eyes puzzled.

"You mean you aren't grounding me, or sending me back to the States, or preferring charges? Look, Cary, I swear I couldn't figure any other way to do my job as a fighting pilot, than the way I did. If I—"

"I told you that was all," Cary Sellman said flatly.

"You got to listen," Bull persisted. "Sure, I like to do my fighting with elbow room! I admit that. But I'm willing to take your orders until there isn't any other way to get the Japs or to bring the ship back. At that point, I think it is up to my judgment. If you don't trust my judgment, well—that's another thing again."

Sellman pointed to the door of the HQ shack.

"That way out, Lieutenant. 'Tenshun! ... About-t-t—face! For'ard ... march!"

CHAPTER III

Sort of Curious

BULL sat against the wall of the screened Ready room and moved his rum-and-bitters to his lips for another long drag on the glass. His eyes were troubled. Across the room, Howie French eyed him.

"What's on the mind, Bull?" Howie asked. "You look bothered."

"Swanee" Taylor eased his huge bulk more comfortably on the straw mats.

"What's bothering him is he hasn't got any mind," he cracked. "Ask Sully or Speed Chandler if he has. They ought to know, because they have no minds, too. They know all the symptoms."

"Nothing is on my mind," Bull said, after downing his rum. He got up and went out into the sun in time to see what was on his mind. Cary Sellman. Cary, who was standing outside Squadron HQ.

"Wonder what he plans to do?" Bull puzzled.

For he was convinced that his skipper was not through. He knew Sellman too well to believe that the man would idly utter a—well, why not face it! A threat!

"Nothing will stop me from taking care of my men; not even if I have to kill to do it! I promise you your death the next time you leave the formation. I warned you more than once, Bull. I'm through talking, and now I'm acting."

Bull watched the commander of Fighting Fifth cross over to the armament shack, turning over in his mind the various things that Sellman had said concerning Bull's proclivity for dropping clear and "getting elbow room" in a fight. The big pilot grinned to himself when he thought how he had construed those various things as threats. But the grin was only half-hearted.

"Shucks, he'll get over his grouch," he decided. "He has a lot on his mind. I'll just mosey over and get in his way so we can have a real talk about things."

With this in mind, Bull took up a course that would bring him close to the Armament shack. When he came alongside the building, he peered through the screening and saw a score of men busy examining ammo, loading the gun-belts,

making records of ammo expended by the various planes that had just returned from flights, and doing the hundred-and-one things that armorers have to do.

Sellman was standing near the screen, his eyes not on the outside, as he talked with the master sergeant in charge. Bull slowed his pace and loafed nearby. He couldn't help but overhear some of the conversation that was exchanged between the skipper and the sarge.

Idly, at first, he listened. Then his mouth dropped open with stunned disbelief when he heard more, and rapidly he threaded the talk he had heard with what was being said now.

"—and you think you could tell if it were Yank slugs, or Jap slugs, that had brought a plane down, Sergeant?" Cary Sellman had asked.

"Well—maybe," the non-com said. "But it would be hard, even if the plane were in good shape. O' course, the Nips go in a lot for dumdums and that sort o' outlaw stuff. But they use straight-up stuff, too. Now, a metallurgist could analyze the slugs, if any were found in the plane or in the crew members o' the ship, and maybe tell from the metals just whether they were Jap or our own."

"But not well enough to swear to, eh?" Sellman was pinning the man down. "Not that sure of it, eh, Sarge?"

The sergeant was puzzled. "I don't just get the drift o' this, Skipper. You mean—"

"Figure this way," Sellman said slowly. "Suppose there is a dog-fight over land and one of our boys accidentally puts some slugs into another of our boys. Could anybody tell that hadn't seen it happen?"

"Hm," the sergeant mused. "Hm-m-m. I wouldn't say they could without going through all that sort of inquiry I spoke about. You'd sorta take it for granted a Jap'd got the guy."

"Thank you, Sergeant," Sellman said. "I was just curious."

BULL was sort of curious, too, when he watched his skipper come out of the shack again and make his way off down the tarmac. Curious—and with a suspicion growing to certainty in his mind.

"Cary would do just that," he speculated, "if he figured I had a beating coming to me and wouldn't let him discipline

me without a board of inquiry. He'd take the thing into his own hands for execution!" The big pilot grimaced. "Now, ain't this a sweet set-up! If what I think he means is correct, I got as tough a gunner after my hide as there is in the South Pacific skies!"

For Bull McThom was sure, deep in his heart, that ruthlessly correct and strict Cary Sellman had elected himself a one-man firing squad to punish Bull for what the skipper considered a flouting of orders.

"Gosh!" Bull muttered, as he walked slowly away. "He's got me coming and going! He's got me, or the Japs get me! And if I took a story like this to Wing or Group, they'd have me locked up as nutty!"

Reasonably, too, they would mark him down as nutty, as Bull saw it. Stranger things had happened in the tropics than that a man falsely accused his commanding officer of intended murder.

Stranger things had happened, too, in the tropics than that a commander murdered one of his own men for a fancied offense! Bull blinked soberly and tried to think the thing out.

When the flight hit the air next morning for a routine patrol, Bull studied Cary intently but couldn't make out any change of manner about the man. For the Fifth's skipper was as studiously impersonal as ever, so far as the big pilot could make out.

It was some thirty minutes later, when the flight was hammering low over a far beach-head to punish an unwary Jap detail that it happened!

Hanging hard to Cary's wing throughout the flight as a matter of precaution, as well as of following orders, Bull pulled out slightly to range his sights on a squad of fleeing Nips. He was skidding expertly in a fanning movement that gave his slugs a wider spread, when suddenly some slugs stitched an ugly seam into Bull's own left wing.

With a surprised grunt, Bull whipped up and over and then around, in a slow roll. At the same time, he switched his eyes around for the Jap plane that had sneaked up on him. There was a ship close to him, rolling with him, orange-red flame rippling from its fixed wing guns.

But it was Cary Sellman, and not a Jap.

Bull snapped his radio inter-com alive. "What the devil do you think you are doing, Cary?"

"Sorry, Bull," came the cool answer. "I was helping you spray those Japs when you went around. I just held it too long, I guess. It won't happen again, fella!"

"You mean, you won't miss me again!" Bull thought.

When he came out of the strafing attack, he made sure to keep Cary well in sight at all times. The best way to do that, he found, was to hug to the skipper like a shadow of Sellman's own plane.

"Woulda been sorta tough if I'd been plugged," Bull said to his commander, back at the tarmac. "And somehow they'd found it out, back here! Would have looked—bad!"

SELLMAN smiled thinly and shrugged.

"Oh, I dunno. It's happened to you before, hasn't it? Other pilots have shot you a dose of hot lead, by mistake. Or you've clipped one of ours the same way. You probably won't have a thing like that happen ever again."

"Not if I can help it, I won't," Bull was thinking when he went out. "And I think I can help it!"

He thought he could that afternoon, when an alert brought them all running to the dispersal area to beat off an attack by some Showa Sho 98s—Jap fighter-bombers. The three-man Nip blitz planes were swarming in for a punishing smash at the Yank tarmac under escort of a dozen Zeros.

Bull whipped up in the formation take-off and hugged hard to Cary's wing. He cursed bitterly when Howie French accidentally sprayed his wing with lead, but he hung on grimly. He was still hugging to the wedge formed by Cary's fuselage and right wing when the skipper blared over the inter-com:

"Break through the Zeros and go after the Showa Shos! We got to get them, and to hell with the Zeros! We're expendable! The airfield isn't!"

Two Zeros bucked in and tried to cut Bull away from Cary, but the big pilot wasn't having any. He raked the Zeros with his guns and held a hard-ahead course until one Zero buckled and flamed earthward, while the other zoomed wildly at the last possible moment. And

then the twin-flying Yank planes were inside the magic circle and were strafing the Showa Shos.

Two ships went to wing smashed a leaden path straight for the bombers. Two ships added up their total armament and strung it in close order, and the answer, to the Jap attackers, summed up death.

One Showa Sho was marked by a huge black plume as it rolled to its back and reached for the jungle below. Another broke in the middle, throwing a grimacing Jap crewman out into the air while the two remaining in the wrecked ship fought vainly for escape.

Bull started to pull out and go after a Zero nearby. But he grunted his disgust with his own absent-mindedness and ruddered back to sit in the lee of Cary's wing again.

He was still there when the flight landed.

"Nice going, Bull," Sellman said flatly.

"Tough luck," Bull said, as flatly.

"What?" Sellman stared suspiciously at him. "What was tough luck?"

Bull grinned sourly. "I thought you missed a ship you were after. Maybe I was wrong, huh?"

CHAPTER IV

Sky Team

LATER, thinking it over, Bull came to talk to Sellman about the whole set-up.

"No use letting the guy commit murder, if that is what he is about," the big pilot thought. "Anyway, what in heck have I got to go on but my own suspicions? Besides, the armament sarge just about told him a thing like that could be detected. And Cary Sellman isn't a dope. He'd take no risk in that, any more than he would in ordering me for a board inquiry that he couldn't make stick!"

But at the skipper's quarters, Bull had another stunning surprise.

Sellman was busy at the rough table in his room, the sweat standing in beads on his face as he worked over some empty cartridge casings. Bull stood in the doorway and stared.

Cary was absorbed in working slugs

out of one set of casings into another type. The big Yank pilot came closer, his eyes wide and his face taut. When Sellman turned his head and caught Bull's eyes, the big pilot waited a long moment of silence.

"What's that you are doing?" he demanded then.

Sellman held his eyes. "Trying some Jap slugs in American casings. What do you want?"

"Nothing," Bull said flatly. "Nothing that I haven't already found, I mean." He went out again. At evening mess, Bull watched Sellman.

"How can the guy be so cold-blooded about it?" he puzzled. For the big American had already figured, "Sure! Those Jap slugs are for me. In case something slips, and I'm downed by him over land, and my body or the ship is examined too closely!"

Next day, he deliberately shortened the distance between his own plane and that of the skipper's. So much so that Sellman, seeing the change, said sharply:

"What are you doing, Bull? Is that ten feet separation?"

"It's healthier this way, I find," Bull cracked. "O' course, you might sorta get your wing into my prop if you should decide to take a bead on something—er—close to you. But I figure I'll live longer like this!"

And it was that way when they swarmed down on a group of *Nakajimas* from some hidden flat-top; wing to wing. It was that way when they blasted a fast-stepping, low-flying squad of Zeros. Wing to wing, their total gun power making of them a lethal unit that scoured the skies.

It was that way when they landed, and the grinning gang of Fighting Five gathered around—of all places—Bull McThom's plane.

"What are you two guys?" one of them asked. "The Siamese Twins of the air? Holy smoke, you must be trying to murder one another!"

"Something like that," Bull murmured, his eyes following Cary Sellman. He wondered why he couldn't be angry with the man.

As if by intuition, the Skipper turned, met Bull's gaze.

"Want to see you in Headquarters, Bull," he said crisply. "Now!"

Bull followed, a shrewd grin on his

face. "Huh!" he thought. "Guess Cary realizes I'm wise to him! I'll see what he has to say about it." His grin disappeared when he thought: "Boy, can't he fly!"

Sellman, despite the oppressive heat, closed the door to his room and faced Bull.

"Cut out that murderous flying where it isn't necessary, Bull," he said stiffly. "You scared the devil out of me, with your wing resting practically in my right ear."

"I thought it was necessary," Bull said slowly, "to prevent murder. That all, Skipper?"

SELLMAN fired a cigarette for Bull, and got his own started.

"No. I—ah—well, I was trying to figure some way of telling you how much I like the way you are working with me. We've got a killer-diller set-up, the way we were flying the last two days. Right?"

Bull nodded. "Uh-huh."

Sellman seemed to be hard put to it to speak on.

"Ah—as I told you before, we're different," he finally said. "I have trouble in getting close to people, in letting my hair down, if you know what I mean. Like now, I have trouble in telling you what I think of your sticking close, despite the fact you don't think it is the right tactics."

Bull seemed to be forcing the admission when he said:

"I gotta get this out of my system, Skipper, so here goes. I think you got something in this shadow fighting we are doing. It's sorta hard, at first, but I think it works. Anyway," he added heavily, "it seems to be saving my life!"

Sellman didn't meet Bull's eyes for a moment.

"So maybe I can tell you this way," he said, a trifle gruffly. "I'm recommending you for a promotion—Captain McThom! I have a way of taking care of my men, so since you're sure of the promotion, I'm giving you a spare set of my railroad tracks to wear instead of your single silvers. Okay?"

Bull gulped. "Huh?"

"Yeah," Cary Sellman said, a grin spreading over his face. "And something else I want you to have—to share with me."

He delved into his duffle-bag, came up

with a score of cartridge casings. Yank style. That had been loaded with Jap dum dum slugs.

"You can help me unload these slugs on the Japs that make and use them," he said. "Our troops captured some ammo recently, and I got some samples. We'll give 'em back. How about it?"

Bull gulped, and reddened guiltily. "Gee, Skipper!" he said.

Cary Sellman's face was a huge grin when he stuck his hand out to shake Bull's.

"I told you I had ways of getting what I wanted, didn't I, fella? I think you sort of let your imagination run away with you lately." He closed his left eye in a significant wink and chuckled. "How about it?"

Bull flushed, moved his feet awkward-

ly, broke into a grin of his own, and then the room was echoing the hearty laughter of them both. They shook, and the way they did it you knew it was the beginning of a beautiful sky team.

Cary Sellman grinned when he slammed Bull in the ribs.

"There'll be murder in the tropics, pal," he said, "but it won't be you posing as the corpse. I know a lot of Jap rats who will fill the bill better than you, you ex-Lone Wolf! Come on with me and have a look-see at how the rum is holding out!"

"Yippee, Skipper!" Bull howled, his face flushed with a friendliness that he hadn't known in long years. He took up his station at Cary's right elbow. "Lead the way. I'm afraid you got a gun on you!"



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Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin J. Webster, director of flying at Stewart Field, goes over the details of "cross-country" with six West Point cadets

Wings of West Point

By CAPTAIN CHARLES D. FRAZER

CADETS TAKE TO THE AIR AS THE MILITARY ACADEMY INAUGURATES ITS TRAINING PROGRAM AT STEWART FIELD

STEWART FIELD has no stately trees, no ivy-covered buildings and very little tradition.

There's no time for tradition—not now. West Point is "souped-up" for the duration. And, though only a few months old, Stewart Field, the Air Forces Basic-Advanced Flying School at the U. S. Military Academy, is as much a part of West Point as the East and West Buildings, the assault course and the mule mascot of the football team.

The first group of cadets to be trained at Stewart began work on August 25 of last year. Wheeling BT-13As out onto the runway, they took off from a field which was then, and still is, an airfield in the raw.

Stewart Field was once the city airport of peaceful, historic Newburgh, New York.

Today, like many other Air Force fields, it is a boom town—a scene of cement and gravel, planks and blueprints, and the litter of

fresh construction. Bulldozers are everywhere—uprooting tree stumps, joggling out rocks and boulders, leveling great hunks of ground. Laborers in overalls and enlisted men in fatigues bustle in all directions. Army trucks swarm over neighboring roads.

On the south side of the field, half a hill has been cut away. There are scores of new red-brick buildings and the wooden frameworks of more to come. Flanking this colony is a 700-acre plateau, a broad L-shaped tabletop, which soon will hold 6,000-foot runways. There is much to be done at Stewart. Construction will not be complete until September, 1943.

But already, from the welter of dust and dirt, there has taken form in the granite-filled mountains above the Hudson River a school which may well play a starring role in the future of the Army Air Forces.

Sweet Sixteen

The origin of the school dates back really to 1927, when an Air Corps Detachment at the Academy was first authorized. The detachment consisted of a few officers and enlisted men, a few amphibian planes and a couple of hangars along the river bank.

But this was not enough for those Army flyers. "Ducks" were all right, but they wanted land planes, too. Unluckily, the country around West Point was too hilly for a suitable field.

They began to talk about Newburgh, 12 miles to the north. In 1930, Samuel Stewart had deeded some land to the city and a cock-tail napkin of an airport had been built. It was small, but it would do.

For several years, the Air Corps Detachment used Stewart Field as a base, and eventually, in 1937, plans for its expansion were developed.

Last fall, Generals George C. Marshall and Henry H. Arnold decided to introduce flight training as an elective in West Point's course

the history of the Military Academy, if not in the life of the nation."

Since that hot August afternoon, day after day, a steady stream of BT-13As has kept the air about West Point churning with activity.

There are 245 cadets in this first group of students. They are in the class of 1944. Ordinarily, they would have two years of training ahead of them.

But West Point's course has been shortened from four years to three, so these men will graduate next June, a year ahead of time. Somehow, they must get in their flying time, must absorb the rudiments of aerial navigation, bombardment, and kindred subjects, and at the same time must keep up with all the other studies at West Point.

Noses Are Ground

These courses include chemistry, modern language, mathematics, physics, history, military art, military engineering, military history, mechanics (including thermodynamics



One of three Link Trainer buildings at Stewart Field, West Point

of instruction. Flight training thus became the only major elective at the Point.

Growing Fast

The directors at West Point took a good hard look at their old blueprints, threw them away, and ordered new ones. They decided to move the hill. Instead of two hangars, they planned 10. They visualized mile-long runways that would accommodate any type of plane up to the heaviest bomber. They projected all the manifold housing and recreational needs of the officers, instructors and enlisted men stationed there.

Then the dirt began to fly. Ten months later, on August 25, Stewart Field, "Wings of West Point," was dedicated.

The field was rough and full of debris, but it was ready. When Major General Francis B. Wilby, superintendent of West Point, summed up the significance of the occasion, he called the decision of Generals Marshall and Arnold "one of the most momentous in

and fluid-dynamics), ordnance, economics, government, military topography and graphics, military law, military hygiene, military administration, theory of flight, weather and the tactical employment of Air Forces.

This, mind you, is in addition to the instruction they receive for flight training, which takes in navigation, meteorology, aerial mapping and photography, code and communication and, of course, actual flying.

Each cadet in this first class at Stewart took primary flight training at a civilian school. Chances are, he gave up his summer furlough to get it. No primary instruction will be scheduled at Stewart for a while.

Today, the flying cadet lives at the Point and pursues the routine of his class. First call is at 5:50 a. m. At that time, the cadet arises, gets dressed, polices his room and stands reveille at 6 o'clock. Breakfast is at 6:30, and by 7 o'clock he's on his way to Stewart Field for flight instruction.

He leaves the field in time to stand noon formation at the Point, eats lunch and gets

to class at one o'clock. After three hours of class, he may either get practical field exercise or continue an additional two hours of directed study. At five, he leaves the classroom, dresses, stands afternoon formation and eats the evening meal. Then comes a precious 25 minutes that are unscheduled—the cadet's own. At 7:30 comes call to quarters, and two inspections before 10 o'clock taps.

The second classmen who are doing their basic flight training at Stewart Field must also recite each day in mechanics, three mornings a week in chemistry and two or three afternoons a week in languages. If it rains, the cadet gets an additional two hours in military topography and graphics—one hour to study and one hour to recite, for the West Point system is based on a recitation and grade for every man every day, not a quiz now and then.

No 40-Hour Week Here

The average day, outlined above, is Monday through Friday. Saturday is usually a half day, but in many cases the flying cadet uses the week-ends—including both Saturday afternoon and Sunday—to make up some of the flying hours he might have missed because of bad weather. The command at Stewart Field is exceptionally careful never to send cadets into the air when the weather is threatening.

An advanced flight training course will be activated at Stewart Field in December.

The cadet now taking his basic will begin advanced training on New Year's Day, 1943. He will continue his ground school work, taking such subjects as photo interpretation, identification, armament, gunnery and bombardment.

On June 1, he will get his wings as a pilot and, at the same time, graduate from the Military Academy with a complete background of military education.

By then, younger classmen of the Point will be coming along, and Stewart will be in full swing.

This speed-up of instruction at the Academy has been accomplished by close scheduling of study periods and by wartime elimination of certain activities, such as the famous and impressive dress parades.

Today, Colonel John M. Weikert, commandant of the flight school, worries about one thing—weather.

Cold Weather woes

"Winter hurried us," he explains. "After a certain time up in this country, you simply can't pour concrete. But when we couldn't pour concrete for the new apron, we just finished up with gravel and kept going." That seems to be the whole spirit at Stewart Field—keep going. Nothing else could have brought about the results already visible. About a hundred buildings have been erected. Last fall saw one "Grand Opening" after another. One day it was the opening of the PX, another, the first service chapel on the hill, another, the first night of the camp movie theater.

Enlisted men, assigned to Stewart for duty in school and service squadrons, had to be housed for months in a "tent city" in woods bordering the field. But, just before cold weather set in, the camp was struck, and the men all moved happily into brick barracks. Bachelor quarters and a club for officers have since been completed.

The principal concern of the officers directing Stewart Field, of course, has been the actual airplane and training facilities. Almost all these are completed—runways, hangars, operations headquarters, storage rooms, a control tower, Link Trainer buildings, ground school classrooms, libraries and the rest. Three auxiliary fields are in the making.

Obviously, Stewart has to become a field second to none in equipment and facilities. No one can foretell the number of cadets who may have to be schooled there during the war. In peace-time, it should be able to provide full aerial training, primary, basic and advanced pilot work, plus both single and multiple engine experience.

When construction of Stewart Field is finished, 200 officers and 1,800 enlisted men are expected to be on duty there. From 250 to 300 Cadets should be in training by that time.

Right now, Stewart is strictly on a wartime basis. Every man on the field, civilian or officer, "G. I." or cadet, is in a big hurry. A sign at the road entrance reminds them that "Hitler Won't Wait."

The men training in this first class are in a special hurry. They are going places, preferably to the points marked by arrows on the front of a hangar, where signs read "To Berlin—3,121 Mi." and "To Tokyo—8,117 Mi." This atmosphere, come to think of it, is a tradition in itself—a logical heritage for the new, raw "Wings of West Point." As one officer at the field puts it—

"Some day Stewart will have ivy, too."

NEW SUCCESS OVER ATHLETE'S FOOT

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There was an explosion and a bursting sheet of flame as the plane crashed into a sand dune

MURDER RIDES HIGH

By **CARL NESSLER**

*Larry Wade, Naval Air Cadet, Sets His Sights
for a Sabotage Ring and Bombs the Target!*

AT THREE thousand feet, the N3N-3 Navy trainer was still climbing upstairs as smooth as a well-oiled escalator. Banking away now from the barracks and runways of Floyd Bennett Field, it tilted its wings against the sparkling waves of Jamaica Bay, and headed

straight into the brisk and sunlit morning.

Today was the kind of weather to make any airman tingle for a cockpit chair under the seat of his pants. But the youngster in the little yellow plane was stiff with fear.

It showed in the white knuckles

frozen around the control stick, the sucked-in cheeks that hollowed his college-boy face, in his hurried, choppy breathing. There was something grotesque in such terror without apparent reason.

Suddenly, at four thousand feet, his fear seemed to merge with hysteria. With a rasping sob he doubled over. Clutched at his safety-belt. Writhed against it as though trying to break through the leather. The plane, out of control, balanced a second and then heeled over. The horizon tilted; after a moment the struts began to moan. A section of Rockaway Beach spotted with summer cottages whirled crazily into view.

The pilot, clawing at his clothes, was thrown against the cockpit. His eyes bulged at sight of the ground corkscrewing up at him with terrific speed. He screamed.

The cry was lost in the sound of the crash against a sand dune. There was an explosion and a bursting sheet of flame. . . .

The black-and-tan Grease-monkey Five were giving out at the Sky-High Club with "Tiger Rag," in their best boogie-woogie style. Naval Air Cadet Larry Wade hooked his elbow on the bar and tossed down another straight Scotch. It didn't work, either. Any more than the two it bounced against. It takes a lot of forgetting, after they cut a barrack mate out of a plane with an acetylene torch.

"Lee and Henderson and Masters," Wade counted off. "On their first solo, every one of them. All three in less than two weeks. I'm telling you, Jock, it doesn't take sky-writing to spell out murder."

"How you gonna murder a guy four thousand feet up?" The hay-haired fellow at Wade's side lifted a pug nose from a Pepsi-Cola glass and grinned amiably. "Especially when Uncle Sam's had a watchful eye on both the guy and his plane every second for at least twelve hours previous."

"Go ahead and laugh," Wade snorted. "But I'm getting out while I'm still in one piece. If you had any savvy you'd come along right now—before they call you for that solo you're expecting."

"Ease up on that kind of chatter,

Larry. Some of the other guys might hear you and think you meant it."

Jock glanced nervously toward a pair of tables near the dance floor. Larry Wade turned.

The ten or so men seated there might have been a picked bunch from a football squad. Except that they were brighter. Snappier. Had an eaglelike keenness. As flying cubs in the world's best force of naval aviators, they had to be that way. They were having a great time here tonight, too. If you didn't notice the way their hands twitched sometimes. The taut explosiveness of their laughter.

"No wonder the washouts are three to one on the advanced flying exams since those deaths," Larry said. "Look at them! Every one a suppressed case of the screaming meemies. If they had any real spirit— Oh, what's the use!"

His toe beat an irritated tattoo on the rail in accompaniment to some good horn work from the Grease-monkey Five.

A SLEEK-FLESHED man in a tight tuxedo moved closer from the end of the bar. Maxey Hoagland, who ran the Sky-High.

"I couldn't help hearing you sound off, Larry. Maybe you got the right idea, I don't know. But this airport crowd's my bread and butter. So have a heart and pipe down, won't you? You wouldn't want someone maybe to start trouble and have them declare a pal's place out of bounds."

Hoagland rated as a right guy with the flying cubs. He was a soft touch any time for the cuffo-shovers, and his well-padded face was as open and cheerful as the gardenia in his button-hole.

"My mistake, Maxey," apologized Larry.

"No hard feelings, kids. We'll drink to that." Hoagland knocked on the bar. "Refills here, George, on a Scotch and Pepsi-Cola. And a glass of water for me."

"Water?" repeated Jock.

"My stomach ulcers are riding me again," exclaimed Hoagland. He slapped Jock on the back. "You see, kid, I'm not a healthy young buck like you any more."

Larry winked at Jock. He never had

put much stock in that ulcer story. He figured it was just Maxey Hoagland's way of avoiding too many sociable drinks.

As the Grease-monkeys hit the ceiling with some fancy business in brass, the three of them turned from the bar. The crescendo cut short with a cymbal crash. The lights blacked, an amber spot focused, and Gae Lawrence came running out to a storm of applause. She flashed into her tap routine.

In her souped-up costume of a U.S.O. hostess, Gae was something to look at. Small, compact, but with not a gadget missing. And when she danced, she had more dynamics than one of the new dive bombers.

Larry's size-nine shoes fluttered an accompaniment against the rail. Then, as a fast-moving buck-and-wing step brought her close to him, he shoved suddenly away from the bar and fell in beside her. He picked up the dance without missing a beat.

She tossed a smile, her black hair flipping across her face.

"For a college-show trouser—not bad!"

"Look!" said Larry. "Where can I talk with you—right away?"

The dance spun her from his side a second. When he caught up she nodded.

"At the bar, right after this number."

She paced him then into a whirlwind flurry of steps. Larry had a head's height on her, his legs were longer, but in dancing she trimmed him right down to size. They finished to a roar of approval, swelled by table-pounding from where the cadets sat.

"Larraping Larry!" shouted Jock. "The guy that can talk with his toes."

Gae ducked for her dressing room and a costume change. Larry headed for the bar.

"Stepping high, Wade?"

Larry pivoted. The big man that spoke wore a SP armband above lieutenant's stripes. It was Burke from the airfield, on shore patrol assignment. His broad nose crinkled below the thin scar from an old crash wound.

"How many?"

"Three," said Larry. "Scotches. And a fourth one cooking."

"You know our rules about alcohol,

Wade. I'm taking you back to quarters."

BURKE was an armor-plated toughie that had climbed up on sheer ability from the enlisted ranks. Like monkeying with a bomb fuse, to rile Burke. But Larry had been waiting for this chance.

"I'm on week-end leave, Burke. Right now, I'm not studying code in that ground-school class of yours. I'm sticking here. And when my leave's over I'm still not going back." He laughed mirthlessly. "'Join the Navy and see the world.' Six feet of it, right over your face."

The zigzag scar across Burke's forehead showed a hot white. He gripped Larry's arm.

"Get going!"

Larry wrenched loose and swung.

The blow caught Burke's shoulder, staggered him backward. Larry threw another one that missed as the big man hunched and bore in. A blocky fist rocketed square to Larry's jaw. He crash-landed in nothing flat. Burke rubbed his knuckles.

"This should rate a court-martial, Wade. But with your nerves shot by those crashes, I'm letting it ride. Drop in Monday after your leave. We got ways of easing cowards out of the service." He swung around and marched out.

Jock and Maxey Hoagland hoisted Larry to his feet and helped him brush off.

"Tough luck, fella," said Jock.

"Sure. For you and the others that still have to fly. Where's that drink?" said Larry, and grabbed it. Jock and Hoagland took up their glasses.

"The way that battle of yours has got my ulcers playing leap-frog, I don't even know if I can take water now," Hoagland complained.

Larry grinned.

"Better get set for another shock then, Maxey," he said.

"I don't catch it."

Larry had been watching Gae Lawrence as she came toward them, threading her way rapidly between the tables. She ran to him.

"What's all this about a fight, Larry? And that gag about wanting to talk to me?"

"Remember when we rehearsed a couple of times at your place, Gae, we kidded about teaming up in an act. Well—I'm not kidding any more."

"You mean—you're quitting the Navy?" she asked, drawing back.

"Don't talk like Burke. Is a guy a coward just because he wants to go on living? Anyhow—what's the verdict?"

She squeezed his arm.

"As if you didn't know. We'll see Morris at the Paramount Building tomorrow. He can probably book us some hotel dates right away."

Hoagland wailed his grief.

"He knows I live off the airport crowd! So he socks a big-shot officer to get me declared out of bounds. Then he kidnaps my star. Next he'll be heaving stench bombs!"

"A guy has to eat," Larry reminded him.

"Listen, kids—I got a brainstorm," Hoagland said with a huge grin. "You'll probably want twice what you're worth. But why can't this new team open right here at the good old Sky-High?"

Seeing them hesitate he went on.

"There's a little farewell luncheon tomorrow for a bunch of the boys assigned to Pensacola for advanced flying. Why can't you break in the act on them?"

Gae nodded. Larry shoved out his hand.

"You've hired yourself an act."

"Great!" exclaimed Hoagland.

"Drink up, Jock—everybody! We'll have another snort all around to the successful début of Lawrence and Wade!"

LARRY awakened late the next morning in a furnished room in Flatbush. He'd had a hectic night, what with a late rehearsal with the Grease-monkeys, a couple hours lying awake trying to make sense out of that murder theory of his. He kept on trying now, sitting on the edge of the bed, but all he could think of was his tongue that tasted like a piece of sandy fur.

Maybe Maxey Hoagland and Jock had the right dope when they stuck to Pepsi-Cola and water.

He exclaimed suddenly, and dived for his clothes. The idea that hit him

was crazy. But what was there to lose? Larry raced out.

After making one other stop, he pulled in at the Sky-High, where Gae was waiting for him on a luncheon date. She kept eying him curiously while they ate, but he had too much simmering in his head to talk. She left him finally to get into costume, after the party from the Navy field had begun gathering at a couple of the tables.

Larry had risen, too, when one of the cadets came over. It was Bill Peterson, who'd been something of a pal with him and Jock.

"Jock asked me to have you wish him luck. He's slated for a solo this afternoon."

"But he can't—"

Larry's voice stopped as Peterson gave him a broad back and returned to the others. The boys evidently weren't having any of Larry Wade.

Larry didn't stew about it just then. He had seen Burke come in and stand at the doorway. Larry ran to the big man, caught his arm. Burke shook off the hand.

"Whatever it is, Wade, make it snappy," he growled.

"I want to ask a favor, sir," said Larry tensely. "Don't let Jock make that solo this afternoon!"

"Good glory, are you still cry-babying around?" Burke replied disgustingly.

"I'm trying to stop a murder. One similar to the other three that died in those plane crashes."

Burke kept silent a moment.

"The investigations fixed those deaths as accidental. I'll admit, though, there were one or two fishy circumstances. Do you have any proof of what you've just said?"

"Not exactly, sir. Just a theory how they could be staged. You see, if—"

"You haven't got any theory, Wade. You just got a vacuum where your spine ought to be. You want to think those accidents were murders, to convince yourself you have a real reason for bailing out of the service. Well, I haven't got time to listen!"

He shouldered past.

Larry could have taken another poke at him. Proof, he wanted! Now, how—Wait a minute!

Larry moved unhurriedly till he stood beneath an overhanging balcony. Then, as no one looked, he slipped up the stairs and tried a door at their head. When it gave he walked in boldly. Maxey Hoagland glanced up from a desk, where his dressing-gowned figure had hunched over papers. He creased his padded cheeks in a smile.

"A real bargainer, eh? Coming to talk terms just before the act goes on," he observed jovially.

"Burke's down there," said Larry, seating himself on the desk corner. "I thought maybe you got something to tell him."

"You're making double-talk, kid."

"Those ulcers of yours," said Larry. "I got to thinking how you mentioned them last night and threw your arm over Jock's shoulder. And how you pulled the same stunt a couple days ago with Masters, just before he got killed."

"Sure." Hoagland nodded. "Those ulcers are always bothering me."

THE naval air cadet took a deep breath.

"I figured that act of yours might have something to do with those crashes," Larry said bluntly. "How it might be some sort of code. A way of telling the barkeep who gets doped, and when. I even figured the dope you used might have something to do with ulcers—so in case you're caught with it, you got an alibi."

"All right." Hoagland shrugged. "I dope a guy and he doesn't feel it till the exact minute he's doing a plane solo. Who am I—Fu Manchu?"

"I stopped in on a doctor," Larry continued coldly. "He named some medicines used for ulcers. One of them's belladonna. He says it paralyzes the stomach action."

"This is getting good." A thin grease of sweat coated Hoagland's face.

"Suppose a flyer on his first solo's been doped with this belladonna. He's a bit nervous, maybe has a touch of stomach gas. As the plane climbs to lower air pressure, the gas in his stomach naturally expands. With a paralyzed stomach he can't get rid of the gas. So what happens? Pressure

against the heart and lungs. Cramps that fix it so he can't control the plane!"

"The whole idea's screwy," Hoagland protested, his hands edging away from the papers on his desk.

"Suppose a lot of guys are doped that way on their first solos," Larry persisted. "On some it won't work. But the batting average is pretty good, and the rest get killed. The guys who haven't soloed get so jittery, the whole training program's blocked."

Larry had been watching closely. Suddenly he hurled himself across the desk.

"Get away from there!"

Jerking Hoagland from the gun in the drawer, he gripped the man's dressing gown, knotted it tight into the pudgy throat. Threw the thick body back against the chair.

"Do you come with me now to spill it to Burke? Or do you prefer talking from a hospital bed?" Larry growled.

Hoagland gurgled, made motions at his throat. Larry loosened the grip.

"You win!" wheezed Hoagland. "I—"

All at once, as he looked beyond Larry, his expression relaxed and he let out a chuckle.

"It's about time I was seeing you guys," he said.

The gag had whiskers, so Larry Wade kept his hand clamped onto the man as he turned to look. It wasn't a gag. Two men stood at the door. Businesslike men. The most businesslike thing about them were the pair of automatics trained on Larry's midsection. The muzzles motioned silently and his hands raised.

"Meet Taubie and Otto," Hoagland sneered.

"Pardon me if I don't shake hands," Larry retorted.

He looked the gunmen over for future reference—in case there was a future. Taubie had opaque blue eyes, as chilling as ice down your back. Otto had a stance like a boxer's, poised and ready on the balls of his feet.

"Keep facing that way!" ordered Hoagland, approaching from behind.

Larry wondered why—until he got the answer in the form of a fist behind the ear. He didn't know the café man packed that kind of wallop.

"That's for mussing my robe," Hoagland reminded him. "No hard feelings."

He sank down in his desk chair again and waited a moment for his breathing to slow down.

"Trouble with you, kid, you don't give anyone else credit for brains. When you started putting on that act last night, I figured you were nosing around for something. So far as you're concerned, you reserved your slab in the morgue right then. Only, we figured we'd have more time to dope out something nice for you before you showed up this morning."

Grease-monkeys down below and then cut short.

"There goes my entrance cue," said Larry, grinning sourly.

Hoagland looked bothered.

"Listen, kid. Did Gae see you this morning?"

"We ate together," Larry admitted, and played a hunch. "She'll sure start wondering when I don't turn up for the show."

"The out for that is, you are going to show up," Hoagland decided.

"Yeah?" said Larry.

"Right. You'll stick to dancing, though. No funny business. Remem-



*"I'd Like to be Back of the Guns on a Fighter!
I Even Wish One of the Gunners Would Get
it So I Could Replace Him—"*

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COMING NEXT ISSUE



LARRY'S heart pounded. "Who you working for, Maxey?" he asked.

"Who do you think? Some guys across the water, partly. Mostly for little old Maxey."

His voice dropped plaintively, as he went on.

"Why'd you have to get snoopy, anyway? Otherwise you might have finished up nice and neat in a wrecked plane. Like those other guys. Like Jock will this afternoon. This way, it's gonna be kind of a messy job all around."

"I'll try to be as little trouble as possible," promised Larry.

It fell pretty flat, even to him. Especially to him.

A muffled chord sounded from the

ber, there'll be half a dozen gats on you and Gae. Anything happens, you two get it first."

"Suppose I don't want to dance?" Larry suggested.

"You wouldn't want Gae to start thinking that something's fishy, would you? So we'd have to knock her off right away."

"I'll dance," said Larry shortly.

"That's the stuff, kid."

Hoagland skirted around the automatics and whispered instructions to Taubie, who slid the gun into his pocket and left. Hoagland went into the other room and came back, arranging a fresh gardenia in a morning coat. He winked companionably.

"Let's go, kid."

And that was that.

At the sight of Larry Wade leading the way down the steps, the Grease-monkeys banged again into the opening cue. Gae Lawrence skipped into the spot and Larry ran to meet her.

Their first number was the old standby—"Strolling in the Park." Sliding easily through the familiar routine, Larry felt a hot nervousness that wasn't part of the dance.

Taubie lounged at the door. Otto stood at the bar with Maxey Hoagland. The hands of all three bulged in their pockets. Even the waiters and barmen had their eyes on the naval air cadet. Funny—he never noticed before what a hard-mugged lot they were.

The dance brought Larry close to the cadets' tables. Even if he'd had a chance to slip in a word, they wouldn't have listened, the way they bent to their plates and made a show of ignoring him. It looked as though Jock was the only friend he had left in the service.

And in less than an hour, Jock was set to die in a plane crash!

The number ended. Larry waved the Grease-monkeys to silence. Taubie shifted at the door.

"An old-time clog, without accompaniment!" announced Larry.

IT WAS tough, clogging in his soft soles, but he did the best he could, pounding out the jerky rhythm desperately. It wasn't loud enough to lift the cadets from their desserts. Lieutenant Burke did look up once, but only for a second, his broad face sneering before he turned back to his pie.

Gae's solo followed, then their finale. Gae hurried to her dressing room.

Larry looked around in desperation. Hoagland and Otto closed in on him casually, shepherded him up the stairs and into the apartment.

A moment later Taubie came in with Gae. Still in costume, she ran to Larry.

"What's it all about? He said—"

She looked from one to the other as the door bolt shot home behind her, and the guns appeared again.

Larry leaped angrily for Hoagland.

"Why, you—"

Hoagland's gun waved him back.

"You couldn't really expect us to

take a chance on her, kid. When we didn't know how much you might have spilled."

"What's he talking about?" Gae asked, turning white.

"Maxey here's the guy that engineered those plane crashes," Larry explained. He spoke slowly, stalling for time. "I kicked myself out of the Navy to get time to check up on him, and knew I had something when he hired me to dance."

Hoagland interrupted him.

"What do you mean by that, kid? I'd like to know where I slipped up."

"You might have known a washout like me would be unpopular with the naval air crowd," said Larry. "You could only want me around because you thought I might know something, and you'd like to keep an eye on me. Which suited me fine, because I figured on jumping you first."

Larry's voice deepened.

"I'm sorry, Gae. I didn't mean to get you into this."

"Forget it. The act's Lawrence and Wade, isn't it?" Gae said bravely. She glanced at the guns again. "Give me a cigarette, somebody."

Cool! Spunky! Larry Wade watched admiringly as she took the cigarette from the silver case Hoagland extended, bent to the lighter. She was playing for time, too. A lot of good that would do, he thought.

There was a rap on the door. Taubie let in George, the barkeeper, and a pair of tough waiters.

"The naval gang just left," George announced.

"That means the payoff for you, kid," said Maxey Hoagland. He looked around slowly, his glance stopping at Taubie. "You wear a belt?"

Without a word Taubie unbuckled and slipped it off, held it out. Hoagland shook his head.

"Make a loop. Just a second, and we'll have things set for you to use it."

He motioned to the others. Otto and the waiters closed in on Larry Wade. Gae opened her mouth to scream, but George grabbed her and clapped a rough hand over her lips. That was all Larry needed. He leaped and rammed his fist at the nearest waiter.

He connected. But at the same moment, Otto caught Larry's jaw with

the flat of the automatic. Larry staggered against the wall. Dazed, the blow still ringing in his head, he fought back at the three of them, tried to dodge away as Taubie slipped the noose belt over his head.

He felt the slick leather throttle around his neck. A burning pressure shoved against his eyeballs—

There was a crash somewhere. Like wood splintering, Larry thought dimly. He wondered why the belt grinding his windpipe suddenly loosened. Then he saw the blurred figures break through the door.

LIEUTENANT BURKE was in the forefront, looking big as a house! Larry saw the dark blue of police uniforms! The olive-green outfits of the Floyd Bennett cadets!

Taubie fired pointblank. But Larry lurched against him, threw the shot wild, and then Burke had the man and sledge-hammered him to the floor. Otto's gun blazed twice. A policeman clutched his side, dropped. Roaring a battlecry, Burke leaped and caught Otto's arm, twisted it back till it snapped.

He caught the gun that fell from the limp fingers and looked around.

Maxey Hoagland, running for the other door, had almost made it, Burke squeezed the trigger. A red flower sprouted from the back of the slickly combed head and the Sky-High proprietor, without a sound, folded to the floor.

The police had backed the rest of the gang into a corner, their hands raised. Burke turned to Larry Wade.

"You don't have to worry about Jock, son. I phoned in the flight cancellation before we came up."

"Great!" said Larry, rubbing his neck ruefully. "So my message came through all right."

"Sure," Burke grinned. "I didn't believe it, at first. But when I saw all those gunmen planted around the dining room, that was proof enough for me."

"What message?" Gae interposed, wide-eyed.

But Burke was busy.

"Another thing, Wade," he said. "I want to apologize about the other evening. I see now you faked that fight, because you were on the trail of something hot. I'll expect to see you on the field Monday."

Gae was not to be put off.

"You said something about a message," she persisted. "What message?"

"Wade gave it to me during your act. 'Pilot murderer is Maxey.' He tap-danced it out in code." Burke thought of something then. "Say, Gae, you won't mind Wade's going back to the field and breaking up the team, will you?"

"Breaking it up?" Gae laughed. "We're taking on a new member. 'Lawrence and Wade and the U. S. A.' I bet we'll entertain the boys in Tokyo, when they capture those sneaky Japs!"



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Here Come

THE AIRBORNE TROOPS

By
BRIGADIER GENERAL FRED S. BORUM

Commanding General, First Troop Carrier Command

AMERICA'S airborne troops are in the news. During the assault on North Africa, parachutists were flown 1,500 miles non-stop from England to attack Oran. This was the longest air invasion on record.

During General McArthur's drive in New Guinea, our planes carried combat units deep into the jungle and dropped tons of food and ammunition to our troops to help humble the Jap.

These were impressive successes. But they are a mere hint of things to come.

A preview of America's airborne strength was held in Texas late last fall. These maneuvers were the first of their kind ever attempted by the U. S. Army, and the results were significant.

The basic military problem was as follows: Hypothetical enemy forces had crossed the Rio Grande from Mexico and driven a wedge into Texas, occupying three airports. Two of these fields were near Eagle Pass and Del Rio, forming a base of the wedge along the river, while the point of the triangle nearest our forces was at Bracketville.

Theoretically, the enemy held these posi-

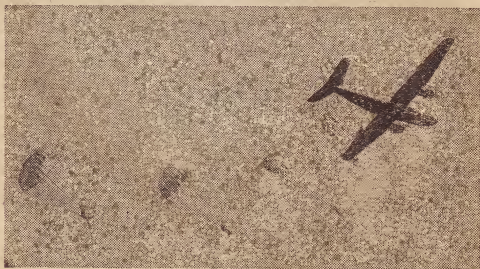
When our parachutists and sky troops invade Europe, Hitler will get a lot more than Crete did—here's how they'll do it!

tions with strong units of infantry supported by field artillery of all calibers, and by air forces, machine-gun companies, anti-aircraft and engineering and service groups.

Our forces opposing the enemy were concentrated outside San Antonio.

They consisted of selected units of parachute troops and an infantry task force of the Airborne Command, 2nd Infantry Division, all under the command of Major General Walter M. Robertson, commanding officer of the 2nd Division.

With these troops, were two groups and a glider-equipped squadron of the Troop Carrier Command, Army Air Forces, under the command of Colonel Maurice M. Beach. They flew twin-engine aircraft of the C-47 and C-53 types. (Structural differences between the types are slight.)



Official U. S. Marine Photograph
Paratroops as they jump from a transport plane



Official Photograph, U. S. Army Air Forces
Airborne troops leap from a glider ready for action

Bracketville's "enemy-held" airdrome was the first objective.

Air Attack in Texas

Attack upon this base, as upon others that followed, fell into four main phases. Imagine yourself at Bracketville, observing the operation. Assume that the field has already been heavily bombed, as would be the case, whenever possible, in real warfare.

First come the paratroopers. Planes fly over Bracketville at a low level and drop the "umbrella men" to seize and hold the airfield. After a sharp engagement, they gain control and immediately set up radio communications. By this means, together with pyrotechnics and ground panels, they direct incoming transports to landings on the field.

This is the second phase—the deplaning of airborne infantry and the unloading of jeeps, trailers, motorcycles, artillery pieces, ammunition and supplies. As quickly as they are

emptied, the planes take off again for fresh loads. This procedure continues throughout the day, even into darkness.

Third phase of the pattern of attack comes on the second day and is primarily a problem of re-supply and consolidation. Food and ammunition are dropped by bright-colored parachutes. Additional men and pieces of equipment are brought in.

Here the gliders play their part. Towed by large camouflaged aircraft, the huge motorless ships are quickly cut loose, landed and parked at the unloading area. From each glider rolls a jeep under its own power, rapidly followed by armed men.

Fourth and final phase of the operation is the evacuation of casualties—stretcher cases and walking patients alike—to be followed, ultimately, by complete evacuation of personnel and equipment as the attack moves forward.

In the Texas maneuvers, three airdromes

were "taken" in this manner—Bracketville first, Eagle Pass second, Del Rio third—with the execution showing marked improvement at each step of the problem.

Statistics of Victory

From a flying standpoint, the box score of this tough assignment was most interesting. Here are some figures:

Approximately 1,100 round trips were made between departure fields and objective airports.

Total distance flown was 337,000 miles—almost 14 laps around the earth's equator.

Approximately 14,000 men were transported, plus some 1,400 tons of supplies, equipment and ammunition. Equipment included jeeps, one-ton trailers, motorcycles, large howitzers, heavy caliber machine-guns, light caliber machine-guns, submachine-guns, airport mines, mortars and radios, all in addition to oil, water, gas and one day's rations for the men.

For the flying personnel it was a long, arduous grind. Each ship was manned by a pilot, co-pilot, radio operator and chief engineer. Loadings and take-offs were scheduled far in advance of dawn, and the day's work of flying did not end until long after sundown. Men and machines were both taxed to the limit. Both stood up incredibly well.

Perfect Record

Flying continued under varied conditions, including winds up to 35 and 40 miles per hour, at low altitudes over rough terrain.

Still, in the whole operation, not a pound of equipment was lost and not a man was injured. Luck played some part in this record, admittedly.

One ship, for example, suffered a badly damaged wing, and the pilot had to make a forced landing just before dawn. But he succeeded in putting his heavily-laden craft down safely in a strange field.

Again, a plane got out of control when caught in a cross wind on a take-off. The ship skidded across a couple of ditches and through a shack, stopping right side up about three-quarters of a mile from the field.

But the crew and airborne troops immedi-

ately requested another ship and made their objective only a little off schedule.

There were close calls. Eleven hundred round trips cannot be flown without a few uncomfortable minutes. But the coolness of the pilots and the ruggedness of the big "tin geese" they flew won out in every critical situation.

The efficiency of these exercises in airborne warfare, coming only six months after organization of the Troop Carrier command, was gratifying to all concerned.

It's a Big Job

To the Troop Carrier Command is assigned an all-important responsibility—aerial transport of parachutists, infantry combat teams, glider-borne troops and equipment—evacuating wounded by air and training and making available troop carrier units to meet requirements in the theatres of war.

Though a relatively new division of the Army Air Forces, the command already has units operating all over the world. The 1st Troop Carrier Command has its headquarters at Stout Field, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Squadrons are the basic tactical units. To each squadron is assigned Douglas DC-3 type aircraft, designated by the Army as C-47s or C-53s, in addition to the aircraft gliders for transport of both troops and equipment, which are standard for each squadron.

Actual warfare complicates problems, naturally. During an actual invasion, it might be necessary to land troops very deep in enemy territory to cut communications or capture an important installation.

Ground forces thus transported by plane and glider might be isolated for some time. In that event, the Troop Carrier Command would be responsible for the continued supply of the men, as well as the evacuation of wounded and the transport of air-trained medical personnel.

The Troop Carrier Command represents one of the newest developments in modern warfare. In the evolution of ground-air strategy and tactics, it is certain to play an increasingly important role as new missions are determined day by day. As the Command's motto has it, "He conquers who gets there first."



Next Issue's Headliners

LIGHTNING OVER NEW GUINEA, a Thrill-a-Minute Novelet by Robert Sidney

Bowen—**WORKHORSE**, a Dramatic Air-War Novelet by Norman A. Daniels

—Plus a Gala Roundup of Zooming Stories and Features!

GREEN FLIGHT, OUT!

By
CLIFFORD D. SIMAK

*Brave Men Rise from the Flaming
Past to Guide a Stricken Pilot
Through the Very Jaws of Death!*

THE afternoon shadows were slanting across London when Flight Lieutenant Kermit Cary came out of the hospital.

But Cary did not see the shadows. Inside his brain was the picture of a head swathed in bandages. And hands, also bandage-wrapped, like huge white, clumsy boxing gloves. That and the smell of antiseptics, the lingering fumes of ether, the half-guessed aroma of pain.

He couldn't wipe from his brain the mumbling voice that came from the swollen lips framed by the bandages, the futile, blinded groping of the awkward hands.

But more than that, he could not forget the half resentment, half embarrassment he had sensed from the figure that lay there in the room. Resentment that he, Kermit Cary, should have dared to come. Embarrassment—the embarrassment of a man shorn of physical abilities.

Cary shook his head, trying to shake away the things that lingered there, but they refused to leave. Perhaps he shouldn't have gone. Perhaps he should have forgotten Reggie, the way he had forced himself to forget all the others. The others were dead, and Reggie still was alive, but—

He forced himself to say it. Reggie would have been better dead. Reggie



Then Cary jumped,
far out, to clear the
falling ship

already was dead as far as the things worth doing, the things worth thinking were concerned. Cary shuddered to think of what might be behind those shielding bandages.

A man who is pulled from a flaming plane usually doesn't have much left to live for. People, Kermit Cary told himself, shouldn't pull men from flaming planes.

He quickened his step, watching for a cab or some driver who might give him a lift to the airdrome. But there were no cabs, and the cars that threaded their way through the littered streets were loaded down.

Probably it had been wrong for him to go and see Reggie. If he hadn't gone, Reggie would have understood that he was busy. A message would have done as well. But, no, he'd had to go—

For he and Reggie were all that were left—the last two men of the original roll of Number Six Fighter Squadron. The "Mad Yank," they had called him back in those days, but no more. To these youngsters who had filled the places of those others, he was simply "Cary". They were respectful, a little distant even, and they watched him too much.

Cary knew why they watched. He had caught scraps of conversation when he suddenly came into the mess.

"How long can Cary take it? Even if a man were made of steel—"

Things like that. Wondering when he would crack up. How long his luck would hold. How long his nerve could stay.

They guessed a little of it, of course. But they couldn't guess it all. They didn't know how it felt to be the last survivor of the original squadron. They didn't know how it felt to see the others go down, one by one.

O'Malley over Dunkerque. Smythe and Chittenden blazing torches in the sky above Dover. Flight Lieutenant Welsh screaming down into the Thames. They didn't know what it was like to see new faces taking the

places of the old, hearing new voices where the old had been.

And above all, they could not guess the haunting terror the squadron's *last man* must feel. The black nights of wondering if he himself might not have been the jinx that had sent the others plummeting to death. The all-gone sensation of knowing that one's own luck is running thin. That one literally is living on borrowed time—

Brakes screamed beside Cary.

"Want a lift?" a voice said.

Cary suddenly came to life.

"Why, yes."

"Which way?"

Cary told him.

"Take you right past it," said the man.

CARY studied the driver. Obviously he was a clerk of some sort. Neatly but not too well dressed, a bit on the oldish side. Gray around his temples. Coat collar a little worn and shirt cuffs slightly frayed.

He could picture the man at home before the bombers came. A small house of his own with a flower garden. Probably roses. Yes, Cary decided, it would be roses.

"Have to hurry," said the man. "Going to take the old woman and the kids out into the country again tonight."

Cary nodded. "Might be wise at that."

"A little hard sleeping," said the man, "but we get along all right."

The motor droned softly, sputtering a little now and then. Twice they stopped to pick up other pedestrians. Several times they were detoured by roped-off areas protecting time-bombs and debris-filled streets.

Cary relaxed, thinking, scarcely hearing the talk of the other three in the car. He was remembering the mumbled words that had come out of the bandage-wrapped face, the puffed lips scarcely moving.

"It was von Rausnig. I got one of his decoys, but he flamed me—"

He hadn't asked Reggie why he

hadn't taken to the silk. There must have been a reason. Probably he'd tried to beat a crash. Probably he had tried to save the ship.

So it had been von Rausnig!

"They ought to start coming over in another couple of hours," said the driver.

"Who?" asked Cary.

"The Jerries."

"Oh, yes," Cary agreed. "Undoubtedly they will."

The driver left him off at his field a few minutes later. His flying mates had eaten when Cary walked in, and were lined up at the bar. They greeted him vociferously.

"Come on, Cary! Have a double. Looks like another night."

"There'll be a moon," said young Harvey.

After all, no matter what the newspapers or the writers or anyone else might say, this Battle for Britain was no medieval war, no jousting of chivalric knights. It was cool, deliberate fighting with no holds barred, no quarter asked or given.

Von Rausnig, with twenty-three planes to his credit; no, twenty-four now. For it had been the Nazi ace who had shot down Reggie—

A BATMAN was at Cary's side. "Pardon me, sir, but the dinner's getting cold."

Cary flared. "Throw it out the window."

He shoved the empty glass across the bar.

"Another double," he ordered.

He saw them looking at him for just

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"Wonder if von Rausnig will be out tonight?" asked Derek.

There were sounds of disgust.

"Von Rausnig, the dirty coward! Always flies with two men on his tail so you can't get at him."

"Decorated by Hitler," jeered Harvey. "For what?"

"Look, men," declared Cary. "Von Rausnig is a good fighter. He knows his stuff. He doesn't take the chances you chaps do. He always plays it safe. He doesn't go batting off on hair-brained hero stunts."

They hooted him good-naturedly and the mess corporal shoved a double brandy across the bar. Cary picked it up and drank, his mind whirling.

Von Rausnig, with twenty-three planes to his credit, the only Nazi flyer who carried distinctive markings on his plane. A cold, calculating fighter, a squadron leader. True, he always was tailed by two other flyers, but that was the smart way. No use of taking chances.

a moment, and then their eyes moved away.

"Don't you think you ought to have a bite?" suggested Derek softly.

"I know what I want," snarled Cary. "I don't want dinner. I want another drink."

"Take it easy, old man," urged Derek.

"Derek," snapped Cary, "if you ever say that to me again, I'll smack you flat."

He seized the brandy glass and the liquor splashed upon the bar.

"I've been taking it easy for months now," he said, and did not realize he was almost shouting. "I took it easy in France and over Dunkerque. I took it easy at Dover and between here and the Coast, when we fought the Jerries back from London. I took it easy when they came over and blasted the guts out of us here. And I'm still taking it easy!"

He realized there was silence in the room, an unnerving silence. He saw

their faces, all their faces, uneasy and a bit embarrassed, staring at him.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I don't want a single one of you feeling sorry for me."

He drained the brandy and, turning on his heel, marched off to his cubicle.

The rest stared at him in dull silence.

Darkness was sifting through the city outside the windows when the inter-squadron speaker blared its first orders of the night.

"Red Flight, all out! Red Flight, all out! Pilots of Red Flight! Green Flight stand by! Green Flight stand by!"

Cary hoisted himself from his bunk and stepped hurriedly into the mess. Green Flight was his.

The three members of Red Flight already were going out the door into the briefing room. Harvey and Derek were struggling into flying togs.

"Jerry's starting early," Derek grinned.

Cary grunted and sat down on an empty bomb-box, began pulling on his outfit. Outside, on the cab rank, he heard the thunder of the Spitfires. And far away, somewhere down in London's East End, he heard the first rumble of the *Acks-Acks*.

The speaker gurgled and blared.

"Green Flight, all out! Green Flight, all out!"

The Red Flight Spitfires were now splitting the night wide open on the take-off.

"Come on, men," snapped Cary and led the way into the briefing room.

Behind the desk sat the squadron leader, the three rings of gold braid on his sleeve gleaming dully in the lamplight.

"How are you feeling, Cary?" he asked.

"I'm feeling all right," Cary growled and clumped outside.

GREEN FLIGHT'S three Spitfires were waiting, trembling like great hounds held on the leash. The

exhausts flamed softly, throwing a faint radiance on the ground.

The recording officer shoved papers into Cary's hand, shouting to make himself heard above the blasting of the Merlins.

"Wave coming up the river," he summarized. "High. Probably will shut off their motors and glide in. Watch sharp for them."

Cary nodded.

Inside the ship, he pushed the hatch cover back into position and fastened his safety-belt.

"Ready, Derek?" he asked into the flap mike.

"Ready," acknowledged Derek, his voice carrying the sharp edge of tension that Cary had heard so often before from so many other men. From O'Malley and Smythe and Chittenden. Reggie, too.

"Ready, Harvey?"

Harvey was ready.

The floodlight slapped down the field and the shadow bar was there to line up the take-off. Clearance flashed from the Aldis lamp. Cary shoved up the throttle knob and the Spitfire moved. Gaining speed, the three fighters thundered down the turf, fled into the black.

Cary, handling the ship almost by instinct, headed through the Notch, that narrow lane of clearance between the swinging cables of the barrage balloons.

"Keep tight," he warned into the flap mike. "Stay close. Watch out for the kite strings."

"We're right on your tail," said Harvey crisply.

A faint glimmer in the east told of the rising moon. A Nazi hunting moon.

Cary bared his teeth and rammed the throttle up the gate. The Merlin talked, talked with all its thousand thundering horses.

Cary's altimeter said they were through the Notch, above the balloons. He glanced at the map strapped to his thigh and spoke into the mike, calling

for an area. Observer corps gave it to him.

He snapped directions to Harvey and Derek and swung in an arc for Limehouse. The Thames embankment guns were barking, and the blackness of the sky was pricked with the sheet lightning of rifled *Ack-Ack* shells.

From far away came the *crump, crump* of exploding bombs. The phones in Cary's helmet barked swift, terse orders at him.

The Spitfire was a little pool of light and instruments in a dark immensity. Far below, London was blacked out, but with gleams of light showing here and there. The guns still coughed and the *crump, crump* of the bombs continued. Man-made lightning flicked and flashed across the sky. Searchlights slashed up, crisscrossed, centered and held.

Under Cary's hand the plane slashed across the night.

Then he saw them. Three, four, five dark shapes spotted by the lights. He screamed into the mike, and Derek and Harvey whooped back.

The Spitfire now was no more than a thing of tremendous power to hurl at those black shapes netted by the lights. More lights came up and ringed the invaders, sliding across them, keeping them marked.

Cary snapped off the safety and held his finger over the gun button on the stick. There were eight guns in the wings, eight deadly Brownings waiting for the signal.

One of the Dorniers loomed up in the stabbing light, nose pointed high, straining for altitude. Cary snapped the Spitfire at it and tightened his finger on the button. He saw his tracers flicker and spatter along one wing. Then the Dornier was gone, the Spitfire was tearing under it. Cary swung the plane into a stiff climb and looped.

MOONLIGHT filled the cockpit and threw dancing shadows on the hatch cover. To the east, Cary could see the golden orb just creeping

over the channel. Behind him a Dornier was flaming, writhing in a fiery death.

The rest of the Nazis were gone.

Thrumming through the night somewhere, heading for the French coast. Cary peered through the glass, trying to make them out. But they were nowhere to be seen.

Blind rage and humiliation shook Cary. He should have had that Dornier cold, yet all he had done was pepper a wing. The lights had set it up for him and he had missed.

"Cary! Green Flight! Cary!" said the phones.

"Here," said Cary. "Who got that ship?"

"Derek did," said Harvey.

Out of the corner of his eye he caught the sudden silvered gleam of the propeller coming at him from above. Instinctively he dived and rolled, then jerked the Spitfire into a climb. Here, far above the city, the air was molten moonlight, so white it seemed to have actual substance.

Cary wheeled his ship and saw the Messerschmitt climbing toward him. With teeth clamped shut, he nosed down, maneuvering for an attacking point. The Nazi dropped off and fled, Cary after him.

The Spitfire shivered to a sudden impact. The Merlin stuttered, and the instrument panel all at once was a mangled piece of wreckage. Instinctively Cary swerved, the stuttering engine screaming as if in pain.

Staring at the smashed dials, Flight Lieutenant Kermit Cary knew that he had fallen for a trick he should have recognized. The first Messerschmitt, after missing him, had not even tried to fight, had turned and fled, drawing his attention while another Nazi, from above, had dived and riveted itself on his tail.

Fighting in the moonlight is tricky under the best conditions. But, Cary told himself, he should have noticed that second ship, should not have fallen for the lure.

The Merlin was still stammering. When Cary tried to lift the Spitfire's nose, it failed to respond properly. Its loggishness sent his heart into his boots. Swiftly craning his neck, he saw the Messerschmitt above and behind, straightening out for another burst.

Terror tightening his throat, Cary hauled the ship almost straight down, shoved the throttle to its limit. With the engine misbehaving, he knew the chance he took; knew that he might be unable to pull it out of the dive. But it was one way, the quickest way, to shake off the attacker. Once he dipped into the darkness untouched by the moon, he and his crippled ship would be hard to find.

But the realization of this possible danger was cut short by the abrupt presence of a greater one.

Flame licked out from under the engine cowling. First a tiny flicker, then a blinding sheet that swept over the hatch cover, curling and flaring at the paint.

With almost superhuman strength, Cary fought to bring the Spitfire out of the dive, protect the cockpit from the blasting fire. Under his frantic efforts the plane leveled slightly. With one hand still holding the stick, he shoved back the hatch cover with the other, and clawed loose the safety-belt.

Wind whipped at him furiously. Once the hot breath of flame washed toward him as he crouched for one split second, ready for the leap.

Then Cary jumped, far out, to clear the falling ship.

HE PLUNGED out of moonlight into blackness. Below him he heard the whining scream of the corkscrewing Spitfire, saw it burst into a gout of flame that trailed swiftly earthward.

He jerked the ripcord. The straps of the parachute rocked him when they took hold, and Cary swung in sickening arcs. Then he was wafting

down, alone in the blackness of the night.

The *Ack-Acks* were quiet for the moment. The blast of the bombs was gone. But that, he knew, was only a breather. The Jerries would be back again. A moon like the one coming up over the channel couldn't be wasted. Later in the night the lunar light would reveal every rooftop, every chimney pot in London.

The Spitfire was gone now, crashed to earth minutes ago, a molten wreck.

Cary shivered when he realized how close his escape had been. This had not been the first time the breath of death had blown past him. Once over Dunkerque, once at Dover—and other times. But each time of late, each time it had blown past, he had asked himself how much longer he could dodge its fury.

It seemed uncanny. Uncanny that he, Kermit Cary, should be living when all the rest had died. That shell splinter and bullet and aerial cannon had failed to spell his end. It seemed positively indecent he should continue to live—

In his mind's eye he saw those others now. O'Malley, who deliberately had rammed a Nazi bomber when his ship had burst into flames, and carried the Jerry to earth with him. Chittenden, who had worn a silk stocking instead of a scarf around his throat. Welsh, who knew all the latest stories about Hitler, Goebbels and Goering.

And Reggie—Reggie, who lay in a hospital now, his head a ball of white, his hands huge, awkward boxing gloves.

Cary shut his eyes, in order to quit seeing them. Because he had to stop seeing them, had to stop thinking about them. He was slipping. He knew that. And some of the others knew, too. Or at least suspected.

He should have speared that Dornier. But he hadn't. He should not have fallen into the Messerschmitt trap. But he had,

He was running to nerves. His liquor slopped on the bar whenever he lifted the glass. And he was snappish with the other men. That outburst tonight, for example. Maybe they would lay that to his being an American. Good Englishmen simply didn't do things like that.

Shutting his eyes, however, did no good. The old ones were still there. Welsh, chuckling at his own jokes; O'Malley, clutching his pony of brandy with both hands; Chittenden laughing, the backwash from the prop whipping that ridiculous bit of silk about his throat.

DEREK and Harvey lounged in the mess. Gray dawn was tinting the walls, spreading its wings over a battered, smoking London. Outside the last of the Spitfires was coming in. Yellow Flight.

They counted audibly as the ships came down. One. Two— There wasn't any three.

The two flyers looked at one another, still waiting for the third. But it didn't come.

"We had a bright moon," Derek said wearily.

Harvey said nothing. After a moment, Derek lowered his voice.

"Are you sure about Cary? Sure he didn't take to the silk?"

"I didn't see him," Harvey answered. "But the moonlight, you know. One can't see so well."

Derek nodded. "His Spitfire exploded. They found no sign of him."

"It's been coming on," said Harvey. "He missed that Dornier clean."

"He hit the wings."

"Wings don't count," said Harvey, sourly.

Heavy footsteps slogged across the briefing room.

"Cary!" the squadron leader cried.

There was no answer and the feet slogged on. Cary stood reeling in the doorway, his parachute bundled under his arm.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said. "I suppose you've been holding a post mortem. Premature, I would say."

"That's unfair, Cary," snapped Derek.

Cary ignored the protest.

"How many times were you up tonight?" he asked instead.

"Five times," Harvey told him.

"It was the worst night yet," said Derek, in a mollifying tone.

"Who flew with you?"

"Saunders."

Cary laid the parachute on the bar.

"Well, Saunders isn't flying with you now. I'm flying with you. I tramped across the whole city of London—a city filled with bombs—so that I could. I even brought back the silk."

"Sure, sure you're flying with us," Harvey assured him quickly. "We don't want to fly with anyone else."

"You know I missed the Dornier," said Cary bleakly. "You know the Messerschmitts took me for a ride. Are you sure you want to?"

"Please," evaded Derek, "stop being foolish, man. Everyone has his off nights."

The speaker blared. "Green Flight, out! Green Flight, out!"

"That's us," snapped Cary. "Just let me grab another 'chute."

"Good Lord, they expect us to go up again!"

"Sure, they expect us to go up again." Cary wheeled on Harvey. "Haven't you heard that we are short of pilots, short of planes?"

Harvey nodded tightly and started for the door. The squadron leader stopped Cary.

"Don't you think you'd better—"

"Better let Saunders take them up?" said Cary bitterly. "You think I'm—"

"It's his flight, sir," said a voice. That was Saunders, standing by the desk.

"If you think you're all right—" said the squadron leader uncertainly.

"Thanks, Saunders," said Cary.

Outside the planes squatted in the pearly light of fast approaching day,

their Rolls-Royce Merlins turning over.

"They're out to break us today," the recording officer shouted at Cary, shoving him the papers. "No let-up at all. They know we're still short of men. They think they'll wear us down."

"Where are they?" Cary shouted back.

"Coming over the Thames Estuary. The boys along the coast had a go at them, but they broke through."

Cary's legs ached as he climbed into the cockpit. The long march across the city, detouring street after street where bombs had spattered buildings, crouching in doorways while H.E. rained down, had taken a heavy toll. And he was hungry. He needed a drink and a smoke, but there was no time for either. The Nazis were coming up the river. Someone had to stop them. Or at least try to stop them.

THE Spitfires sprang down the turf and leaped into the air. In daylight, when one could see what he was doing, it was easy enough to take the notch.

Up they roared into the brightening sky. Once over the balloons they straightened out, streaking southeast. From other points other planes were rising, swift defenders bulleting to meet the invader.

Cary spoke briefly into his flap mike, was assured by the other two that everything was well. Below them the city still smoked. A few fires still burned redly, and a gray pall hung heavily over certain sectors where bombs had rained the thickest.

It was Derek, not Cary, who sighted the Nazis first, a mass of black dots outlined against the lemon and white of the morning sky. Savagely his Spitfire roared into a climb.

Cary watched the Nazis closely, satisfied at the altitude his flight had gained above them. The wave was not as large as some he had seen. Probably

the boys along the coast had thinned it out.

Through the sky other Spitfires were burning up the air. Several flights were coming from the south and others from the north.

Cary rapped instructions into the flap mike, suddenly slid down the sky, his plane a silver streak of vengeance. Behind him came the other two.

The fighter formation below them broke and streaked in all directions, but Cary had marked one plane. Relentlessly he thundered down upon it. With two others, it tried frantically to dodge away.

The safety catch was up and Cary's finger hovered on the button. Without checking his dive, he depressed the firing mechanism and the eight Brownings whipped leaden streams of hate into the Messerschmitt.

Below him the Nazi virtually exploded in mid-air, flying apart, hammered into bits by the slashing bullets. For a single instant it had seemed to shiver, then burst into a blast of flame.

Shrieking past the burning, smoking debris, Cary fought his ship out of its dive and streaked for altitude. But even as he did, he saw something that brought a cry of frosty anger from his lips.

One of the two remaining ships in the group of three he had attacked bore the flame-red death's-head—the personal insignia of the dreaded Nazi ace, von Rausnig!

Thoughts screamed through Cary's brain. Von Rausnig! The man who had sent Reggie down in fiery ruin. The man who had turned Reggie's head into a ball of bandages. Who had robbed Reggie of sight and face and hands.

Black hate rose up to choke Cary, lay bitter in his mouth. One of von Rausnig's defenders now was gone. Perhaps—

Cary whipped the Spitfire through the air with vicious purpose, until the ship groaned and protested at the handling. Another Messerschmitt

screeched past him. Even above the roar of engines Cary could hear the pounding chatter of many guns as *Luftwaffe* and R.A.F. battled in the sky.

Von Rausnig was climbing now. Cary climbed with him. But through his hate of the man who rode the death's-head plane sounded a warning, a memory of what had happened the night before.

Tossing a glance over his shoulder, Cary saw a Jerry diving at him. He rolled the Spitfire and snapped into a climb again. The Messerschmitt, undoubtedly the second of von Rausnig's flight, plunged past and was lost in the shuttling battle below.

BUT the maneuver had lost Cary precious height. Von Rausnig's plane was leveling off now, circling for position.

Then the Nazi was coming at him. Cary saw smoke drift from the guns, felt the storm of bullets strike the Spitfire. But there were no shattered instruments, no stutter in the motor. The blast had drilled his left wing. From where he sat, Cary could see the neatly bored holes the fusillade had made.

Von Rausnig's ship snapped under him and up in a swooping arc. There was no room, no time now to turn for an attack, for the German had lost but little altitude.

Cary grinned tensely. Here was a man who knew how to fly a ship, a man who would not pass by a challenge. No matter what anyone might say of him, von Rausnig was no coward.

The sound of battle drifted up but faintly now. Cary and the death's-head plane had climbed far above it, there to fight out their duel.

Cary swung to the east and spiraled up, watching the other closely. It was like a game of chess, he told himself. Maneuver and maneuver and maneuver. Get set for one blow, one good blow, for that was all it took. A battle

for position, trying to set the opponent up for the final knockout punch.

How von Rausnig did it Cary never exactly knew, but suddenly the Messerschmitt was coming at him again, directly on his tail. Guns yammered thinly. The Spitfire shivered as slugs slammed into its tail and along the fuselage. Cary sideslipped, losing altitude but fighting to keep the nose of his plane well up.

His breath came out in a gasping sigh of relief as the machine handled to the slightest touch. None of the Nazi's bullets had taken effect!

Von Rausnig screamed past and Cary, jaw tight shut, shrieked after him. With throttle all the way up, he plummeted after the Nazi ace's ship, heart hammering in his throat, finger on the gun control.

Now he was in the right position, but at too long a range. If he didn't get that blast in soon, von Rausnig would pull out of his dive and the chance would be lost.

The Merlin howled in fiendish glee as it hurled the Spitfire down upon the Nazi. The wind screamed and whistled piercingly along the streamlined plane.

Cary felt blackness sliding in upon him. He sucked in his breath and tightened his stomach muscles. He simply couldn't black out now. He had to hang onto his consciousness for a few more seconds until he was close enough.

The Nazi ship grew before his straining eyes, but not quite enough—

In the savage wind Cary seemed to hear a chuckling—the way Welsh used to chuckle at his Hitler jokes. The scream of split-open air no longer was a scream. It was the healthy laughter of a man who wore a stocking for a scarf.

Words seemed to ride with Cary in the cockpit now. Words with O'Malley's old familiar brogue.

"Faith, and ye got him now, Yank! Ye got him where ye want him. Dip

the nose a little lower and that will build the speed of ye—"

Only, of course, the words weren't really there. They were just something that rang through a mist-filled memory—

Things were getting blurred and fuzzy, but the Nazi ship was larger now and directly ahead.

"Now's the time, my lad," said O'Malley's quiet voice—and Cary clamped down the firing button and held it there.

DARKNESS rose to suffocate him but he fought it back, holding his finger down, remembering a head that was a ball of bandages, remembering flaming planes over Dunkerque and over Dover.

"That's for O'Malley!" his mind was shrieking. "And that's for Chittenden and that's for Reggie—especially for Reggie—"

He heard faintly, as if from far away, the growling of the Brownings, the hammer of their bark. And suddenly where there had been a Messerschmitt, there was a gush of fire.

Only then did Cary release the button and jerk back the stick.

He blacked out, but only momentarily. When he fought his way back to consciousness, the Spitfire was zoom-

ing skyward and the battle was far away.

But below him, far below, a wavering plume of black smoke trickled down to earth. Cary waved a suddenly feeble hand at it.

The scream of the wind was gone now, and so was Welsh's chuckle and his laughter. But it had been there and so had the voice in his ear—the old familiar voice of O'Malley, who had died long days ago.

Kermit Cary laughed at himself a little unsteadily. Funny ideas a man picks up at times, he thought. Or were they funny ideas?

He scowled slightly as he swung the ship for home.

"Thanks, fellows," he said, to no one in particular.

But Cary knew, deep within himself, whom he was talking to. To those other men who had come out of bitter memory to ride the blazing sky with him.

He knew, with sadder clarity, that never again would he spend black nights wondering why he lived, while they had died. Never again would he try to forget them, and what had happened to them.

It wasn't every flyer who had those who would come and help him when he needed them most.

Calling All Radio Hams!

THERE'S good news for America's army of radio amateurs. The Office of Civilian Defense announces the WERS, the War Emergency Radio Service, a home-grown network of communications which will require the volunteer aid of every capable "ham" in the country.

Using transmitters with a maximum of 25 watts input power, on three bands, WERS will connect Civilian Defense control centers with all district controls, with wardens' posts, fire houses, hospitals and industrial plants, as well as with mobile forces like fire-trucks and emergency medical teams and walkie-talkies.

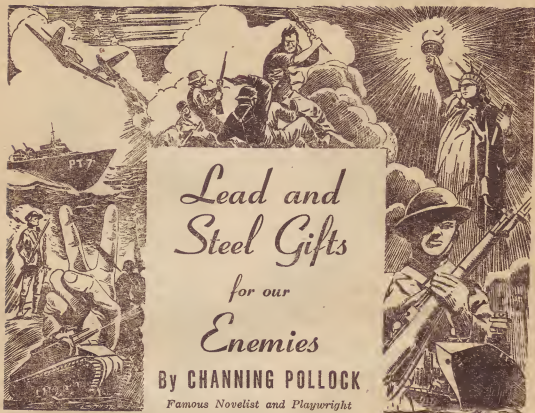
The use of thousands of sets unhampered by wires or cables, means the new system will be virtually invulnerable to

bomb hits or sabotage. Its use in air raids is obvious, but it will also be used in emergencies of any kind such as floods, fires, hurricanes, explosions or any other catastrophe where telephone lines may be down.

Amateurs are urged to apply and to collect junked sets and unused materials which can be assembled into communicators. Not only amateurs, but repairmen, electrical workers, radio engineers and licensed operators are needed.

Personnel selected to operate the new stations will be trained and after passing an elementary FCC test, will receive licenses. Write to: War Emergency Radio Service, Office of Civilian Defense, Washington, D. C.

A WAR BOND MESSAGE FOR ALL AMERICANS!



Lead and Steel Gifts

for our

Enemies

By CHANNING POLLOCK

Famous Novelist and Playwright

DURING the last war, a friend of mine, the captain of a freighter regularly running the blockade to England, explained to me why he left on shore his highly-prized phonograph.

"We might be torpedoed any time," he said, "and I'd hate to lose that phonograph."

"If you're torpedoed," I answered, "you'll probably lose your ship and your life. What good would the phonograph be to you then?"

The same question occurs to me in connection with War Bonds. If we are torpedoed, we shall have lost our liberties, if not our lives.

What good to us then will be the money we didn't invest in funds to save the ship, and ourselves, and the funds?

I'm putting every penny I can into little lead and steel gifts to the Germans and Japanese. When they're licked, I'll get it back; if they're not licked, what good is my phonograph?





They had dropped over the Mitsubishis like avenging hawks of doom

HAS-BEENS DIE HARD

By JOHN L. BENTON

Fortunes of war head Lieutenant-Commander Darcy for shore duty—but there's no age limit to a Yank flyer's fighting courage!

REAR ADMIRAL COTTON-WOOD, commanding the Aircraft Carrier *Tornado*, stared at the pin-pointed chart on the wall of his quarters, and plucked at his lower lip with a thumb and forefinger.

"You feel sure an enemy force is

there?" he suddenly asked, and looked straight at the officer seated on the other side of his desk. "You feel sure, Darcy? Or is this just a means of—"

The rear admiral let the rest slide with a gesture. Lieutenant Commander "Dizzy" Darcy flushed slightly, but his jaw was squared and grim,

and he didn't take his eyes off the senior officer's face.

"I feel sure, sir," he said. "But, naturally, I am not *certain*! I have no proof that enemy forces have occupied Balmoral Island. As our scouting reports state, there are no signs of enemy occupation. No anti-aircraft fire at our patrols passing over the island. And no enemy planes have come up to engage ours. Nevertheless, sir, I have a strong feeling that Japs are there, and laying doggo until the time is ripe to strike. As for myself, sir? I should like to very much, but I do not insist that I be permitted to lead a tree-top scouting patrol over Balmoral. I know that tomorrow I am to—"

Darcy stopped and swallowed. He couldn't go on. The words choked up in his throat and stayed there. For a brief instant sympathy flitted across the rear-admiral's granite-chiseled face. And when he spoke there was just a touch of softness in his usual fog-horn voice.

"It's the fortunes of war, and age, Darcy," he said. "Your being posted to shore duty. I would like for you to remain on flight duty, but I do not make the rules. You're past the age for active flying, and—well, it's simply felt that you can serve best on a shore job. Who knows? It may be my turn next. This is a young man's war, Darcy. And I guess that's just as it should be. After all, you saw service in the last one, as well."

"Two days, sir," Darcy said, and tried to keep the bitterness out of his voice. "I completed my flight training and was posted to sea duty two days before the Armistice. My ship actually left port on the thirteenth. Every enemy plane I saw in the last war—was a captured one. But as you say, sir, it's the fortunes of war."

"Yes, yes, so it is," the rear admiral grunted and fixed his gaze on the huge chart of the Southwest Pacific area. "This Balmoral Island. If you're right, Darcy, we've got TNT right on our front doorstep. From Balmoral the Japs could inflict a lot of damage on convoys Australia-bound. To say nothing of keeping tabs on our fleet movements in these waters. But, confound it, it's fantastic

to think they'd isolate a force there. Once we spotted them we could wipe them out to a man in no time!"

"That's right, sir," Dizzy Darcy replied quietly. "But I might remind you that losses mean nothing to the Jap High Command if they can hurt us in any way. And from Balmoral they could hurt us plenty. Even a small force of dive-bombers hidden there could raise the devil with an unsuspecting convoy passing by. And the damage would be done and over with long before help could reach that point."

REAR ADMIRAL COTTON-WOOD drummed his fingers on the desk for a moment, then shrugged.

"It is probably a crazy idea," he finally said. "Probably a waste of time, and fuel, when we've more important things to do. But—well, there's just a chance there may be something to your hunch. And that's all it is, a hunch. Anyway, go ahead. Take your own Section One, and Walters' Section Two. Make arrangements with the executive flight officer about the time of your take-off, and where we'll take you aboard. That's all, and—and, good luck."

Two hours later Darcy faced the three members of his Section One, and the four members of Section Two. They were all in the ready-room, and Darcy was outlining his plan.

"A tree-top look-see," he repeated, and tapped the chart on the wall. "We'll take off at three hours point thirty minutes and fly northwest until Balmoral is well abreast to starboard, and far enough off not to hear our engines. Then at four hours point forty-five we'll course southwest and around east and come up on Balmoral from the west with the sun at our backs. We'll cover the island tree-top level for thirty minutes, then reform formation—if nothing has happened—and return to Location Six Z and be taken aboard the *Tornado*."

Darcy paused, and his eyes met those of Lieutenant Commander Jack Walters, Section Two Leader. The shadow of a smirk touched Walters' lips, and there was a sort of patient, pitying look in his clear blue eyes. Darcy felt the red creeping up his

neck, cursed inwardly, and looked at the others.

"In the event we see anything that indicates enemy occupation," he said slowly, "we will go in and attack. Of course I'll radio the *Tornado* at once, and request dive-bomber help. Mark this, though! If the enemy force is too strong, don't go throwing your lives away trying to lick them. Do what you can and then clear out. Dive-bomber sections will clean up the job. Our main job is to find out for sure if there is something on Balmoral that needs handling. Okay, I guess that's all. Are there any questions?"

There were none, and a couple of minutes later the pilots started filing out of the ready room. That is, all save Walters. He remained seated with his eyes fixed on Darcy, and with the same faint shadow of a smirk playing about the corners of his mouth. He got up and came over to the raised platform where Darcy stood.

"I've heard the news, Darcy," he said quietly. "Just wanted to say, that's tough. But that's how it goes."

Darcy looked at him and felt the jealous anger an "old man" has for youth, who is about to take over his job.

"Yes, that's how it goes, Walters," he said. "This time tomorrow you'll have my job as Senior Section Leader. The big day at last, eh?"

Walters grinned, and his whole face beamed with satisfaction.

"A long time over-due, Darcy," he said bluntly. "I never did like has-beens to be in command over me. And I've never liked you personally, as far as that goes. I think I like you even less for this grandstand finale. How in thunder did you get the Old Man's okay? Is he slipping, too? Balmoral's been scouted a hundred times. There's nothing there, and we both know it! Just what is the big idea?"

DARCY didn't say anything for a moment. He was too busy clamping down on his own temper. This was more or less the climax of ten years Navy Aviation association with Walters. Through Fate, or just plain luck, they had stumbled across each

other at least twenty times in the last ten years. On each of those occasions Darcy had been appointed to a command that would have been Walters' save for the fact that Darcy was twenty-five numbers higher than he on the Navy list.

Twenty-five numbers higher, and four years older. Service time had put Darcy where he was. Service time plus service record had put Walters up as high as he was. The younger pilot knew that, and he never forgot it. It had been a festering boil that had made him dislike his immediate superior all these ten years.

But now, all that was to come to an end. Age was pushing Darcy off to the side, at last. Walters would be given his rightful command, and—the viper in Walters' breast was rearing its head high.

He was baiting Darcy, and Darcy knew it. The senior of the two was still senior. For this kind of talk Darcy could drag Walters up before the Old Man and prefer charges of insubordination.

But that was just what Walters wanted. He wanted it to go into Navy records that one of Darcy's last sea service acts had been to haul him up on charges. Whether proved or disproved the word was sure to go through the Fleet that Darcy had done his utmost to see to it that the right man didn't take his place.

Darcy, though, clamped down on his anger and refused to rise to the bait.

"No, we don't both know, Walters," he said evenly. "The reason the Old Man gave his okay is because we have no actual proof. Frankly, it is only a strong hunch of mine. I've given it plenty of thought, and I have a feeling that Jap air power is there hiding, ready to spring at the right moment, whenever that may come. Of course, I may be all wet. And . . . Well, if you think so, I'm not ordering you to lead Section Two. You can pull out, and detail somebody else to take over your section."

Walters' face blazed, and there was almost a glint of murder in his eyes. It was a crack he had not bargained for and it stung him all the way through. He got control in a flash,

however. He shook his head, and chuckled softly.

"Not a chance," he said. "I wouldn't miss this fare-thee-well flop of yours for an admiral's stripes. Nix! It will be an honor to help you lead your last patrol!"

"Then be on the flight deck in an hour!" Darcy snapped, and stepped past him and went out of the ready room.

The *Tornado's* flight-bridge clock pointed to three hours point twenty-five minutes. On the stern end of the flight deck eight Pratt & Whitney-powered Grumman Wildcats waited with pilots in the pits, with props ticking over slowly.

In the lead plane of Section One sat Dizzy Darcy, snapping his eyes toward the flight bridge every odd second, and breathing a fervent prayer on the even ones. The palms of his hands felt wet and clammy, and every now and then a tiny drop of sweat trickled down his neck to soak into his white silk flying scarf.

Tomorrow at this time he would be on his way back to shore duty. A desk job, probably, with piles and piles of official papers that any high school graduate could take care of with his eyes closed. But that was the way it was when you got too old to fly, and were transferred to shore duty.

For some insane reason you were regarded as an antique. An old has-been who should be given something to do out of gratitude for past services rendered. That was what he would be headed for this time tomorrow.

BUT today? Today he was still Lieutenant Commander Darcy, Senior Section Leader, aboard the Aircraft Carrier *Tornado*. Today he was still a fighting pilot. And today, he was going to tangle props with death for the last time.

That is, he hoped he would be able to tangle props with death. If his hunch was right, he was pretty sure that he would get the chance to make up for all the active service he had missed in the last war, and all the active service he was going to miss in this one.

But if his hunch was wrong? If he didn't stir up a thing at Balmoral? Well, it would be final proof that the war gods had stacked the cards against him twice in his lifetime!

The minute hand of the flight-bridge clock came down to the half-hour dot. The flight deck crew scampered over by the safety nets that ran the full length of the deck, starboard and port. The flight officer raised his flag and dropped it sharply downward. Darcy gunned his engine and got the Wildcat's wheels rolling.

"Just a little break!" he whispered as the Grumman streaked toward the bow. "Just a little something I can look back on always, and be thankful."

He was abreast of the *Tornado's* stack when his wheels cleared and the Grumman took the air like the graceful man-made bird she was. As soon as open water appeared below he circled to the left and up for more altitude.

A quick glance down back showed that his entire section was off and following him up. He leveled off at four thousand and watched Section Two hit the air. It was a beautiful sight, and for a moment there was no jealousy in his heart for Walters.

"A sweet pilot!" he grunted. "And his boys would follow him right through the front door of Hirohito's palace. Yeah! He'll do okay as senior section leader!"

A couple of minutes later all eight planes were in the air and in section formation. Darcy circled the *Tornado* once, then cut off toward the northwest. He flew dead ahead for some five minutes, then blipped his engine and slid off to the left a bit. He caught the plane, put it into a slow glide, then put his lips to the flap mike.

"Leader to Walters!" he barked. "Returning for quick repair. Take over and carry out mission. Will rejoin you before objective is reached. Orders received?"

"Orders received," came the reply from Walters' plane. "But hadn't we better wash-out the whole thing?"

"You got your orders!" Darcy grated and dropped down and away from the other seven planes. "Carry

them out!" In a little more than six minutes he came in over the *Tornado's* stern and set down, and was caught by the deck trap. No sooner had he stopped than he legged out and barked at the deck crew racing toward him.

"Not enough revs!" he said, and stabbed a thumb at the engine. "Roll her clear. I'm taking K."

He spoke the last over his shoulder as he ran down the deck toward a Grumman with a black "K" painted on her fuselage. In four minutes flat he had her off and had climbed up and around toward the northwest.

He leveled off and flew northwest until the *Tornado* was a dot far behind. Then he abruptly changed his course. He swerved sharply southwest and stuck the nose down a little to pick up all the extra speed he could. He glanced at his watch, and pressed his lips to a thin grim line.

"If this baby keeps her wings on, I can make it!" he grunted.

THE Grumman kept her wings on. The seconds and minutes ticked away into time history. And the blue southwest Pacific rolled by under the Grumman's belly. Darcy's body was drenched with sweat now, and his eyes ached from peering almost straight into the crimson rays of the setting sun.

He checked his course as best he could a hundred times over. And in between times he murmured his prayer of hope and pleading.

And then suddenly he saw it. Saw the small dot that stuck up out of the blue waters of the Pacific. It was just a dot, but it grew bigger and bigger, and finally became a tropical growth-covered island that was shaped something like a tear drop. He licked his dry lips and swallowed the "sawdust" in his mouth.

"Balmoral!" he whispered hoarsely. "Journey's end for an old has-been!"

He sobbed out the last as he stuck the nose down even more and went thundering straight for the island that now seemed to grow right out of the center of the setting sun. He glanced at his watch and gave a sigh of relief. If Walters had carried out orders the main patrol must be fifteen

minutes' flying time on the other side of that tear-drop-shaped island.

"That gives me five minutes!" he murmured. "Five minutes, if my hunch is right. And, please—"

The lush green island was seemingly racing up toward him, with his whirling prop blades about to twist into the tops of the tropical trees. He eased off his dive and went rocking down the long side of the island. Then he cut straight across, wheeled, and retraced his sky path.

Every instant of the time he kept his gaze fixed steadfastly below. But he saw only blurs of brown, and lush green fringed with strips of yellowish white that were the island's beaches.

His heart hammered in wild anticipation. Then it died down and seemed to stop beating altogether as seconds flew past, and he was as the only moving thing in that part of the world. He couldn't see well, for hot tears of broken-hearted defeat were in his eyes.

"No soap!" he heard his own voice groan. "I was all wet! The hunch is a bust. I—"

The last was drowned out by a wild cry that burst from his lips. He sat up straight and brushed a hand across his popping, aching eyes. No, it wasn't magic that is there one instant, and gone the next. It was fact! It was cold reality.

From a seemingly dense stretch of tangled growth two planes had come streaking up into full view. He recognized them at once. Two of the deadly Jap Mitsubishi MK-11s that had led that stab in the back at Pearl Harbor. They were coming up almost at the vertical, and their guns were spitting stabbing streams of yellow-orange flame.

"Mark five!" Darcy screamed and whanged his Grumman over, and around, and down in a dime-area half-roll.

At the same time he put his lips to his flap mike.

"Calling Detroit!" he yelled, giving the *Tornado's* code name. "Enemy occupation of objective. Purple Leader reporting. Air occupation of objective!"

Maybe he repeated his call, but he

didn't know for sure. He was suddenly the middle of a flywheel of guns and wings in the air. Not two Mitsubishi's were up after him, but a dozen or more. Everywhere he snapped his gaze he caught the flash of the orange-red disc of Nippon background by streaking wings. They were all around him, above and beneath.

But there was no cold fear in his heart. There was only wild, uncontrolled joy as he belted the Grumman this way and that, and blazed away with his guns at everything that flashed by his sights.

HE SAW two planes become twin balls of fire falling down toward the lush green island. He saw the wings of a third come off as though sliced by an invisible knife. And then something seemed to blow up inside his head, and waves of inky darkness crowded into his eyes.

He knew that he had been hit, but there was no pain. There was nothing but the fierce joy of being able to fight. He brushed a hand across his face and took it away wet and sticky. But the act gave him back a little of his vision.

What he saw was like peering into heaven, for him. The air was filled with flashing wings, but not all of them were Jap wings. Out of the setting sun had come Walters and the members of Sections One and Two. They had dropped down on the Mitsubishi's like avenging hawks of doom, and bucked-toothed Hirohito's planes were dropping all around like flies on fire.

One flash glance of that beautiful sight, and then an unseen giant seemed to reach up and smack a steel-coated fist against the Grumman's engine. The whirling prop made screaming sound and flew away in pieces into eternity. The unchecked engine made sound like the gods tearing off the roof of heaven.

The Wildcat whipped over on its back and hung there as though nailed to the sky. A million colored lights danced by Darcy's eyes, and his brain was like a frozen chunk of ice bouncing around inside his skull.

The next thing he realized he had

somehow righted the crippled Grumman, he had cut the ignition, and was tooling it down toward a strip of beach. Overhead perdition was breaking loose, and though he was heading for a crash landing he deliberately took time to glance upward, and counted Navy wings.

Seven! All seven were still twisting and darting about with flame-spitting guns and air cannon. And to the east! Were those dots in the blue sky? Planes streaking down toward Balmoral?

He was not able to tell for sure. He didn't have the time. The strip of yellowish white beach was pushing up at him. He had only time to lower his wheels—but they wouldn't go down. Jap bullets had made junk out of the release gear. And there was the beach. Right in front of his nose!

He knew that he had hauled back the stick. He knew that the nose came up. But he was not sure of anything else. The world came up and slammed with terrific force against the belly of the Grumman. Darcy felt his top teeth bite down into his chin, and his bottom teeth cut right up into his brain. Somebody pulled out his eyeballs and threw them away. Somebody else twisted off his arms, and drove his knees up into his stomach. And somebody cut him across the middle, and all the way through. And . . .

"Hold steady, Grandpa!" a voice suddenly barked in his ears. "Gosh, but you old fighting cocks give a guy a lot of trouble. Come on, hold steady! Everything's just dandy—you mad-man!"

He found himself staring bleary-eyed into Walters' oil-spattered face. The Section Two Leader had him around the waist and was half-leading, half-dragging him along the beach.

"Hey, where did you come from?" he heard his voice croak.

"Shut up! I'm Santa Claus. You're supposed to end this farewell flight on a ship's deck, not on a beach. Okay! Up with you over the cowling. You're not dead yet. And just make sure you don't die on me on the way back. I was a sap to come down, anyway. But I couldn't even leave you to

these brown rats. Up with you. Get your arm hooked around that greenhouse brace. Come on, Grandpa! We young fellows got a war to win. We—"

EVERYTHING became all mixed up. There were words, and the roar of an engine. The roar of many engines, in fact. Darcy saw wings cut down through the mounting shadows before his eyes. U. S. Navy wings! Dive-bomber wings!

And the thunder of exploding bombs seemed to make his head break apart in pieces. His body was ice-cold, and wind fingers were clawing at every square inch of him. His body was burning hot, and there was livid flame in his lungs. And everything was inky darkness, and so silent. So terribly, deathly silent, and . . .

"He should have two more legs, because he has the constitution of a horse. Don't worry, sir. Three weeks and he'll just have memories, and a few scars. He'll be awake enough in a minute for you to talk to him. A man his age! He should leave that sort of thing to these young kids. Oh, well! I suppose one's as old as he feels."

The darkness floated away from in front of Darcy's eyes, as though somebody had drawn a curtain aside. He saw the retreating back of the *Tornado's* surgeon walking away. Then he was looking up into the granite-set face of Rear Admiral Cottonwood. The *Tornado's* commander stared down at him a moment, then gave a little shake of his head, and sighed.

"You know, of course, you should be strung up to the yard-arm, don't you, Darcy?" he growled. "Deserting your flight command! Going off on your own without authority! Destroying a Navy plane! Causing a fellow officer to risk his life saving yours! And—well, words fail me! So you speak a few, if you're able. You knew Jap planes were there? And why the devil did you return for another plane, and then not rejoin your flight command? Speak up! I want the whole story now. The part you left unsaid when you wheedled me into granting permission for—for

this madman's venture!"

"Balmoral, sir?" Darcy said weakly. "Is—"

"There isn't a blade of grass left standing!" the *Tornado's* commander snapped. "And certainly no sons of Nippon. Twenty planes—they had there. We got them all, and only lost one of ours. Yours! But the devil with Balmoral! I'm asking you questions, Darcy!"

"I told you the truth, sir," Darcy said. "I really didn't *know*. I just had a hunch. Our scouting planes never saw anything, because they flew over the island in force. But I thought a lone plane might egg the Japs—if there were any there—into action. That breed just can't resist the chance to slaughter one man, hopelessly outnumbered. But in case I got nailed before I could radio the *Tornado*, I had to have some of our planes arriving soon after I did.

"So—well, I got your permission for the patrol. Then I laid out a course to the north and around to the west of Balmoral. We took off, and I faked engine trouble and returned aboard for another plane. That got the main patrol well out of sight. So I took off and flew a straight course to Balmoral.

"And—well, it was like I said. They would stay hidden when planes came over in force, but one lone plane was too much for their greedy hearts. They couldn't resist swarming up for the general kill. But how is Walters, sir? I want to recommend him for the Navy Cross. That was a wonderful thing for him to land on that beach and fly me back aboard. He'll make a great senior section leader, sir. The best one the *Tornado* ever had."

"Walters is getting the Navy Cross," the rear admiral grunted. "So are you and a couple of the others. But Walters isn't being made senior section leader. He . . . Blast your eyes, Darcy! You've made a fine mess of things. Practically mutiny aboard my own ship! And what a howl and holler I'll hear from the Navy Department before things are settled."

"Eh, sir?" Darcy gulped. "I—I don't think I'll understand!"

(Concluded page 97)

SHIP AHOY

A GLOSSARY OF NAVAL PHRASEOLOGY

[Continued]



DEAD AHEAD—In line with the vessel's keel extended and ahead

Dead light—A term applied to a port lid or cover; a metal shutter fitted to protect the glass in a fixed or port light

Dip—A position of flag when hoisted part way of a hoist. To lower a flag part way, then hoist it again

Dock—(see pier)—The water alongside a pier

Dog—A securing device for watertight doors, hatches and manholes

Dogwatch—One of the two-hour watches from 1600 to 2000. From 1600 to 1800 is the first dog and from 1800 to 2000 is the second dog



Dolphin—A piling or a nest of piles off a wharf or beach or off the entrance to a dock for mooring purposes

Double bottoms—Watertight subdivisions of a man-of-war next to the keel and between the outer and inner bottom

Double-up—To increase the vessel's securing lines

Douse—To lower; to let down, as to "douse" sail

END FOR END—To shift one end of a rope to the position occupied by the other

Eyebrow—The metal lip over a port to carry the water to the side of the opening

FAIR TIDE—A tide running in the same direction as the vessel

Fake—A single turn of line when a line is coiled down

Fantail—The part of the stern of a vessel extending abaft the stern post

Fathom—Six feet

Fenders—Canvas, wood or rope used over the side to protect a vessel from chafing when alongside another vessel or pier

Fend off—To shove off

Field day—The day for general ship cleaning

First Lieutenant—The officer charged with the cleanliness of a ship and who is in charge of the C and R equipment and ground tackle

Flag (see pennant and burgee)—A term used only with reference to a four-sided flag, rectangular in shape

Flash Plate—A steel plate to protect the deck from the anchor chains

[Turn page]

Flemish down—To coil a line flat down on deck, each fake outside the other beginning in the middle and all close together

Flotsam (see jetsam)—Floating wreckage or goods

Foggy (slang)—An increase in pay due to length of service without an increase in rank. Technically longevity pay

Forecastle (Focsl)—The topmost deck extending from the superstructure to the stem

Forepeak—The part of the vessel below decks at the stern

Fouled—Jammed, not clear

Frame—A term used to designate one of the transverse ribs that make up the skeleton of the ship

Frapp—To pass a line around another line or set of lines, at the same time maintaining control of both ends of the frapping line. This is often used in connection with lowering lifeboats

Freeboard—The distance from the waterline to the rail or covering board

GAFF—The spar from which the colors are usually flown when at sea

Galley—The ship's kitchen

Gangway—(1) An opening in the bulwark or rail to give entrance to the ship (2) An order to stand aside

Gripe—A lashing, chain or the like, used to secure small boats in the chocks and in sea position in the davits

Ground tackle (Tackle)—A general term used for all anchors, cables, ropes, etc., used in the operation of mooring and unmooring a ship

Guess Warp—A line from forward rove through a thimble at the outer end of the boat beam, used for securing a boat to the boom

Gunwale (Gunnl)—The rail or edge of a boat

Guy—Side braces for booms

HAIL—To address a vessel; to come from, as to hail from some port

Halliards—Ropes used for hoisting sails

Handsomely—Slowly and carefully

Handy billy—A small portable force pump

Hatchway—An opening in a ship's deck for communication or for handling stores or cargo

Hatch—a cover for a hatchway

Hawse pipes—The tubes through which the hawser or chain leads to the anchor

Hawser—A large rope used for heavy work, such as towing

Head—The ship's water closet

Heave to—To deaden a vessel's headway by

bracing some of the sails back. To stop a vessel under sail without taking in sail

Heel-and-toe—Any watch stood four hours on and four hours off

Holiday—A space unintentionally missed while cleaning or painting

Hog (see Sag)—The strain of the ship in which the two ends of the vessel are lower than the middle

Hold—(1) The space below deck utilized for the stowage of ballast, cargo and stores. (2) To hold a line means to make a line fast in such a manner that no slipping will occur. (See Check.)

House an awning—An awning is housed by hauling some of the stops down and securing them to the rail

INBOARD—Towards the fore and aft line of a ship or boat

Irish pennant—An untidy loose end of a rope or article

JACK—The flag similar to the union of the national flag

Jackstaff—The spar or staff from which the jack is flown

Jacob's ladder—A ladder of rope with rungs used over the side and aloft

Jetsam (see flotsam)—Goods which sink when thrown overboard

Jigger—A light luff tackle used for various deck work

KEEL—The timber or bar forming the backbone of the vessel and running from the stem to the stern at the bottom of the ship

Knock off—To stop

Knot—One nautical mile per hour. The measure of speed

LADDER—A metal, wooden, or rope stairway

Lanyard—A line made fast to an article for securing it

Lie off—The practice of having a boat stand by, under control, but not made fast to anything. Underway, under control, but with no way on

Lee shore—the land to leeward of a vessel

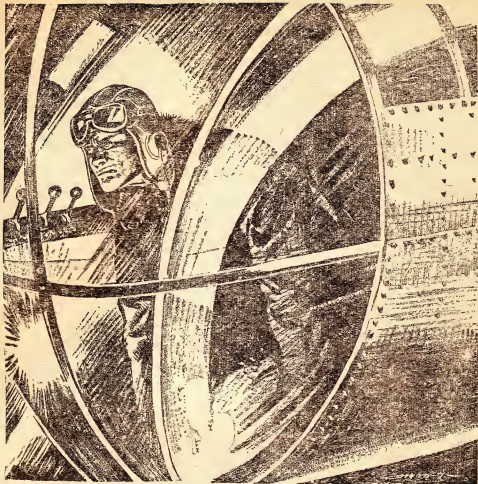
Leeward (looard)—The direction away from the wind

List—The athwartships inclination of a vessel

Log—Continuous record of a ship's activities

Lubber's Line—The vertical black line marked on the inner surface of the bowl of a compass indicating the compass heading of the ship

[To be continued next issue]



His hands were powerless, pinned under the buckled girder

GLASSHOUSE GLADIATOR

By **STUART CAMPBELL**

*Bombardier Jocko Hanlon was in dutch with his officers—
but that was before he went into action over Holland!*

JOCKO" HANLON climbed down from the Air Transport Service plane and took a good look about him.

"So this is North Ireland," he murmured. "Nice. Very nice, and how!"

The last was not because of the rolling green hills that seemed to ex-

tend to the four horizons. It was because of what he saw on the broad stretch of flat ground directly in front of him—row after row of death-dealing bombers of the U. S. Army Air Forces, Bomber Command. There were all types from twin- to four-engined jobs, and beside each one was a load of eggs waiting to be

hoisted up into the bomb bays.

Hanlon stared at them hard and felt good all over. Arriving here at this North Ireland base was like being born all over again. And in a certain way, it was. Just four months ago he had been down under in Australia. A completely trained and graduated bombardier, all set to prove that he was not a waste of money to Uncle Sam.

Eventually the great day had arrived. His had been one of three bombers who were to blast a Jap stores concentration at Rabaul, on New Britain. The great day, his first crack at the back-stabbing rats of Nippon. The day that had been like a shining star in his thoughts all during his months of training. And then—

He suddenly cursed softly and shook his head in a desperate effort to drive away the taunting thoughts that crowded into his brain.

"That was yesterday!" he grated under his breath. "It's all finished—if not forgotten. This is another day, another chance. I must make good. I must!"

"Leave your kits here, gentlemen!" a voice barked. "Report to the checking officer in the Administration hut over there."

Hanlon glanced at the tall all-American-built flying captain who was approaching. And the bottom of his heart seemed to fall out. A giddiness came, and he closed his eyes tight, and clenched his fists.

When he opened his eyes the flying captain was still there. Hanlon hastily turned his head and joined the fifteen other bombardiers, gunners, and navigators trooping over toward the Administration hut.

"Collins!" Hanlon breathed fiercely. "It can't be. It can't! This sort of thing doesn't happen except in a movie, or in a book!"

FOR the next half hour he was busy being marked in by the checking officer, being assigned living quarters, and setting up his personal equipment. But all his movements were automatic. He was hardly conscious of what he was doing, because the name, "Collins," was racing through his brain, spinning around inside his

head like a fly-wheel off true center.

Collins! Captain "Chick" Collins. Chick Collins who had been his pilot that day over Rabaul! It was fantastic and inconceivable. But it was true. Out of all the world's billions, Captain Chick Collins would have to be here at this Bomber Command base in North Ireland. Well, that was Fate for you. Or war, or something.

A sudden knock on the door of his quarters made him jump a foot. He clenched his teeth and called for whoever it was to enter. The door opened and there stood Captain Collins. The pilot was smiling with his lips, but not with his eyes. They looked at Hanlon steadily, and were just a little on the cold side.

"Hello, Hanlon! Mind if I come in? Small world. Or has somebody used that before?"

"Sure, come in, Captain," Hanlon said, and dumped some of his clothes off a chair. "You've come from the commandant?"

Collins' eyes narrowed.

"From the commandant?" he echoed. "I don't get you."

"You've told him, haven't you?" Hanlon said, with an effort. "I mean, about Rabaul? You went after my hide for that business. I sort of figure you haven't forgotten."

A shadow passed across Collins' face. He looked puzzled and angry at the same time. He sat down, avoided Hanlon's quiet gaze and fumbled for a cigarette. Eventually he looked up.

"Time does a lot of things to a man, Hanlon," he said slowly. "I—I guess I went a little too much overboard after we got back from that Rabaul business. But . . . Well, I was mad clear through. Your mugging the whole business made all of us look like a bunch of chumps. And your explanation, that you suddenly got a case of cramps and grabbed the bomb release lever by mistake! Well, it didn't settle so good with me. Not when it happened just as those three Jap Zeros came at us. But . . . Well, I've done a lot of thinking about that since."

Hanlon smiled bitterly.

"I've done some thinking about it myself," he said. "I've tried to make

myself figure how it must have seemed to you and the others. I guess it did look as though I'd suddenly gone yellow, had a bad case of the shakes, and dumped our whole load into the sea. Yeah. It must have seemed that I went haywire. But I told the truth, Captain, when you had me up before the commandant. I did get cramps, and started to pass out. I grabbed for something to hold me up, and it was the bomb release lever. I didn't even realize what I'd done until after Gunner Jacobs had nailed those Zeros, and we were on our way back home."

Hanlon paused, swallowed hard, but when he spoke the bitterness in his voice had mounted.

"So I was behind the eight-ball," he said. "And—and for the sake of everybody concerned I had to request a transfer. I went back to duty in the States. Then I was sent over here with a bunch of the others. I had thought—"

Hanlon paused again, and shrugged. "I guess tough luck follows me around!" he suddenly blurted. "But I won't put in any other request transfer, Captain. This is the end of the line for me, or else. So—so, it's up to you."

Collins smoked for a moment in silence. Then he slowly mashed out his cigarette, and stood up.

"No, it isn't, Hanlon," he said. "It's up to you. That was Rabaul, and the Japs. This is Europe, and the Nazis. We'll leave it that way. And speaking of Fate, Hanlon. Guess what? I've just come from looking at the flight lists. You're down as bombardier for my crate. Well, I'll be seeing you."

"I get it!" Hanlon said harshly as the flyer headed for the door. "Probation, huh?"

Collins stopped at the door and half turned. There was still no smile in the eyes he fixed on Hanlon.

"It's still up to you," he said, and went out.

FOR the next three days Hanlon spent most of the time in the air. He wasn't up there to dump eggs on Nazi concentrations in Occupied France. As a matter of fact the B-25 medium bomber piloted by Captain Collins did not go out of sight of the

base. The hours spent in the air were simply to give the crew practice in working as a team.

They seemed to mold together as a working unit fairly well. Hanlon got along swell with the other members of the crew. And, as a matter of fact, there was no open friction between Collins and himself. But Hanlon knew deep down that his former captain pilot was watching his every reaction like a hawk.

And he knew that Collins was simply waiting for the first real test. Waiting for the time when they would be sent out on an active mission.

That time came on the evening of the fifth day.

Hanlon was in the mess with the others when an orderly arrived with orders for the pilots and crews of two bombers to report to the commandant in the ready room. Hanlon was included in those called, and as he walked through the North Ireland night toward the ready room, his heart was hammering against his ribs.

This was it! Here it was! He was as sure of that fact as he was of his own name. The second great day had arrived. Only it was night this time.

"I'll show you, Collins!" he whispered fiercely. "I'll show you how wrong you were. That—that it was cramps that time!"

Inside the ready room Colonel Stacey, Base Commandant, and Group Captain Wickard, of the R.A.F. Bomber Command, stood studying a well-marked map spread out on the center table. A hanging bulb flooded the table with light, and on one side of the table was a pile of mosaic air maps.

The two senior officers waited until everybody was inside and grouped about the center table. Then Colonel Stacey picked up a pencil, absently tapped it against the thumb-nail of his left hand, and gave them all a nod and a grin.

"Three guesses why you've been called in, gentlemen," he said. "And I imagine none of you needs even one guess. To get to the point, you're down for a special mission. Call it a test mission, if you like. But on how you make out will depend on how

soon the rest of the teams go into real action. It so happens that the members of you two teams have seen a little service elsewhere. That's why you've been selected to break the ice over here. Okay, so much for that."

Colonel Stacey stopped tapping his thumb-nail, touched the pencil point to the map, and drew a small circle.

"That's Helder in North Holland," he said. "At the very tip of the mainland that points up toward the West Frisian Islands at the western entrance to the Zuider Zee. And these are mosaic maps of the area. British and American reconnaissance have brought to light the fact that the Nazis are using Helder Bay as a mine-laying seaplane and flying-boat base. They're working out of there on the northern supply route to Russia. It is well protected by both fighter and anti-aircraft strength.

"We believe that a raid in size would not measure up to the cost. But a sneak raid by one or two planes might possibly do enough damage to put the place out of commission for some months to come. And so we're going to pull a sneak raid on Helder Bay. You gentlemen have been elected. Now Group Captain Wickard has put in a lot of time over that general area. So I'll shut up and let him do most of the talking from here on. Gentlemen, Group Captain Wickard."

SOME three hours later two war-painted North American B-25 bombers waited at the head of the main runway with props ticking over sweetly. Bombs and crews were aboard, and all that remained now was for the signal officer to send the two craft thundering out over the Irish Sea, across England, and over the North Sea to Helder Bay.

Up forward in the glasshouse of his bomber, Jocko Hanlon made a final inspection of everything. His bomb-sight calculations were all worked out and completed. His forward gun was set and ready to go into action in case he needed it. And he was slouched down as comfortably as he could, waiting for the take-off signal.

Swallowing a couple of times in an effort to rid himself of the "sawdust" that seemed to fill his mouth, he stared

out the nose of the glasshouse at the tiny row of take-off lights that stretched the full length of the runway. His heart was still hammering and he could feel little cold beads of sweat on his forehead.

Fear? He wondered if that's what it actually was. It probably was fear, because only fools and story book heroes don't feel fear now and then. But what kind of fear? Fear that he would be killed? Or was it a cold, heart-gnawing fear that something would pop up to make him miff it again?

"And was it cramps that day?" he whispered to himself softly. "Was it cramps, or just fear hitting me in the belly? Did I really go a little haywire, and yellow? Somehow, I'm not sure, now that I'm going out again. Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't. But—tonight! Tonight I'll find out for sure. Like I told Collins, the end of the line for me, or else!"

For a moment wild panic gripped him. Suppose he did have a secret kind of fear that was stronger than the rest of him, and had actually caught him off-guard that day over Rabaul? Suppose it caught him again tonight? And he failed again?

It was a sneak raid timed to the split second. A hair wrong one way or the other, and the whole thing could turn out a bust. It could also cost valuable American lives. He shuddered and wiped sweat from his face.

"Cut it, cut it!" he grated savagely. "This is your show, son. You for it. Make it good. Make it better than good. See that you make it perfect!"

"You set, Bombardier?"

That was Captain Collins' voice coming over the inter-com. Hanlon put his lips to his own mike and reported he was all set. Collins checked with the navigator and two gunners, then "blew" his engines to clear the cylinders.

A moment later the green light on the signal tower blinked. The B-25's two Cyclones kicked up revs, and rose to a mighty roar. The bomber trembled, seemed to hold back, then started rolling forward.

Hanlon fixed his gaze on the take-off lights, watched them rush toward

him at increasing speed, and sweep by out of sight. In a couple of moments the remainder of the row of lights fell away from the plane and out in front was the darkness of night, made even darker than usual by heavy overcast at ten thousand feet.

Hanlon shuddered just once more, then suddenly a strange quiet stole over him. He caught himself humming a snatch of a tune. He took a deep breath, and smiled happily.

"You'll be okay, pal," he murmured. "It was just anticipation, and now that's all behind you. Right! Here comes Hanlon, you dirty Nazis! Duck, and plenty, because here comes old Jocko Hanlon!"

"Aircraft air-borne, Operations. Can you hear me? Over."

THE voice in the earphones was Collins calling ground. Operations gave the check-back immediately, and then the bomber went on radio silence.

Hanlon shifted and stared out the nose and down. The bomber was hurtling across the Irish Sea. It passed in over the west coast of England, and

Collins flashed their signal letter so that British gunners would not open fire.

England was like a dark blanket to Hanlon. A ragged-edged blanket that was just a shade or two darker than the bodies of water on the west and east side. He did see a couple of lights here and there, but they could well have been his imagination. The *Luftwaffe* was still across the Channel, and so it was total blackout for England.

"And when they say blackout over here, they mean it!" Hanlon breathed, as he stared downward. "No wonder the Nazis just dump their loads and head for home. They can't see from nothing down there."

Presently the bomber was out over the North Sea and bearing due east. There was still nothing but darkness ahead and below but as Hanlon stared at it the beads of cold sweat came back to his forehead again, and his heart started to race a little. As a means of clamping down on his nerves he switched on the shaded light and checked his sight calculations again.

(Continued on page 93)

WHY GOD PERMITS WAR!

Why does God permit war? Why does He permit cruelty, injustice, pain, starvation, sickness and death?

Thirty years ago, in Forbidden Tibet, behind the highest mountains in the world, a young Englishman named Edwin J. Dingle found the answers to these questions. A great mystic opened his eyes. A great change came over him. He realized the strange Power that Knowledge gives.

That Power, he says, can transform the life of anyone. Questions, whatever they are, can be answered. The problems of health, death, poverty and wrong, can be solved.

In his own case, he was brought back to splendid health. He acquired wealth, too, as well as world-wide professional recognition. Thirty years ago, he was sick as a man could be and live. Once his coffin was bought. Years of almost continuous tropical fevers, broken bones, near blindness, privation and danger had made a human wreck of him, physically and mentally.

He was about to be sent back to England to die, when a strange message came — "They are waiting for you in Tibet." He wants to tell the whole world what he learned there, under the

guidance of the greatest mystic he ever encountered during his twenty-one years in the Far East. He wants everyone to experience the greater health and the Power, which there came to him.

Within ten years, he was able to retire to this country with a fortune. He had been honored by fellowships in the World's leading Geographical Societies, for his work as a geographer. And today, 30 years later, he is still so athletic, capable of so much work, so young in appearance, it is hard to believe he has lived so long.

As a first step in their progress toward the Power that Knowledge gives, Mr. Dingle wants to send the readers of this notice a 9,000-word treatise. It is free. For your free copy, send your name and address to the Institute of Mentalphysics, 213 South Hobart Blvd., Dept. F-337, Los Angeles, Calif. Write promptly.

(Advertisement)





AAF Technical Training Command Photo

What makes an airplane cannon work is explained to a group of Aviation Cadets and Capt. Manuel Gambetta, Peruvian officer, who are shown at work in the Armament course at the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command School at Yale University. Students taking this course are thoroughly trained in all phases of arming our fighting planes which are doing battle on all fighting fronts.

ARMORER—1943 STYLE

By LEW MARTIN

PERHAPS he comes from New Haven or South Bend or Hoboken. Perhaps he was a shoe clerk or a coal miner or a college senior. Where he came from or what he was doesn't matter now. What counts is that he is an American and that he is the man the Technical Training Command Armament School at Lowry Field, Colorado, is teaching to put in the air the lead and

*THE PILOT MAY FLY THE PLANE,
BUT IT'S THE ARMORER WHO
PUTS THE STING IN HER GUNS
AND BOMB RACKS—AND HERE'S
WHAT MAKES HIM TICK!*

steel and explosive that will drive the Axis hordes from the skies.

"Send me armorers!"

It was Major General Claire L. Chennault,

who, after scanning the bullet-scarred planes of his American Volunteer Group and, later, of his Fourteenth Air Force, who broadcast this plea. That was all. Just send him armorers—men who could put the bombs in the racks, men who

could fit the hard-hitting bullets in the deadly .50 calibers, men who could make guns speak so that the invaders might be silenced.

Rapid Strides

General Chennault's words are typical of the revision of air-attitude which has placed a major emphasis on flying fire-power. There was a time not long ago when America's finest flight engineers designed the world's best motors, fitted them to the world's fastest, most streamlined fuselages, then threw a few guns on just for kicks.

The Curtiss P-36 series, standard fighter equipment for the Army Air Corps until the very brink of war, was fitted out with but two small .30 caliber machine-guns synchronized to fire through the propeller. The Boeing P-26 series, rated the fastest, most efficient plane in the flying-fighting business of its day, was also armed with only two .30 calibers.

Yesterday afternoon's Curtiss series of attack planes, forerunners of this morning's low-skimming Douglas A-20s, which are complete arsenals of death and destruction, were by comparison as scantily clad in guns and bombs as a bubble dancer in your city's toughest nightclub.

The current concept, a concept which makes Lowry Field's mastodonic school of armament a major Air Force factor, is in many ways a complete reversal of earlier flight engineering precepts. Today the trend is entirely toward the ascertainment of fire-power first—after which the plane is thrown around the guns.

Ships Built Around the Guns

The Bell P-39 Airacobra is a good example. The Airacobra is equipped with a 20-millimeter cannon in the nose and six more machine-guns. The twin-nacelled Lockheed P-38 Lightning carries a 37-millimeter cannon and four .50 caliber machine-guns. The reliable Curtiss P-40 series, standby of American pursuit power until recently in this war, is now bearing six .50 caliber machine-guns fixed in rakish fire-power fashion along the wings.

The new Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, reputed to be the fastest high-altitude fighter in the world has batteries of

[Turn page]



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fifties firing in salvo from the wings, and the low-altitude North American P-51 Mustang is similarly equipped. The British Hurricane interceptor and the classic Supermarine Spitfire have both boasted at times of four 20-millimeter cannon and have not only bested Focke-Wulf and Messerschmitt in aerial combat, but have sunk small enemy ships in coastal raids.

When such fire-power hits, somebody is going to get hurt!

Crack Egg Carriers Are Big Babies

Or take a look at today's bombers. The crack egg carriers of just a few years back are lumber barges compared to Uncle Sam's current bombardment lineup. Huge Flying Fortresses and Liberators move faster than yesterday's fighter planes and can stow four tons of bombs in their bellies. Their tremendous range makes them even more formidable.

The defensive armament of these flying dreadnoughts makes them veritable flying munitions plants. The big babies carry up to a dozen .30 and .50 caliber machine-guns able to smack down an attacking foe from any angle. Guns alone on these planes constitute a major weight problem—but they make them the toughest death merchants in the world.

From General Arnold and others who know what we are readying for the Axis have come repeated hints that planes are already on the assembly lines which will make medium bombers of these, our biggest standard warplanes. It is also hinted that real cannon up to seventy-five millimeters will be mounted on the new super-ships, which will make them even deadlier.

The obsolete Douglas B-18 series carried almost the same weight of bombs as the Fortresses and Liberators though the B-18s were nowhere near as heavy ships. The great increase in tonnage is taken up by the two extra motors, and by the triple armament and ammunition required to feed it.

When the new monster planes of which the Douglas B-19 is the slow-moving prototype is perfected for heavy duty, then, brother, you'll have a ship that will hold enough eggs to wipe Tokyo off the map in one sitting—with Grant's Tomb or the Lincoln Memorial tucked away in the bomb-bay just for ballast!

"Send More Armorers!"

General Doolittle's North American B-25 Mitchell is listed today as a medium bomber as is its faster sister, the Martin B-26 Marauder. But both planes can cover thousands of miles in a few hours non-stop along with a man-sized armament complement. They carry around 3,000 pounds of bombs as well, are defended by four .50 calibers and a single flexible thirty.

These are but a few representative examples of what America's fathers of fire-power are turning out these days. Thousands of armorers are needed to care for the guns and bombs, to maintain the costly control equipment and to keep the aircraft's shooting irons in top shape.

That lad we were speaking about a while back—that lad from New Haven, South Bend, or Hoboken—well, he's the fellow that Lowry Field's armament school is teaching to take care of the bombs and guns and bullets that will clear the skies for America's air supremacy.

With all due respect for the pilot, God bless him, this lad on the ground, a lad grossly underrated so far in this man's war, holds the key to aerial victory in his muscular hands. One round, well-placed in a machine-gun chamber, one gun alive with spitting death, one bomb well fused, can mean the difference between win and lose. This lad, unsung and unheralded, is a mighty important cog in America's machinery for victory.

He receives the best training that aircraft science can give him, and the Air Forces Technical Training Command makes sure that he has the ability to consume the knowledge they dish out to him. He came from an Air Forces Basic Training Center—perhaps Sheppard Field in Texas, Keesler Field in Mississippi, Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, or one of several big new stations like Atlantic City, Miami Beach or St. Petersburg, Florida.

Classified in the Top Brackets

There he was earmarked for an Air Forces Technical School because his general Army Intelligence test put him in a top bracket and because he passed an additional technical test that classified him as eligible for technical school. He expressed a preference for armament because he wanted plenty of action, and wanted it fast.

So he went to Lowry. He attended school there eight hours every day for months under experienced tutors using the last word in equipment for his enlightenment. He started out on the so-called basic phases. He learned the fundamentals of electricity and how they apply to aircraft.

He learned what happened when the pilot presses the trips of his guns and bomb racks. He learned what a solenoid assembly is, and how to energize it. He learned about relay switches, magnetic control, and a dozen other phases of electrical armament that he never dreamed existed.

When he had this under his belt, his instructors went to town on chemical warfare. From there, he went into the classrooms to learn about ammunitions and explosives. He picked up a thoroughgoing knowledge of bullets and bombs—what they are, what goes into them and how to use them.

A course in small arms came next, and here he learned the mechanisms and parts of the standard Army weapons—the .45 caliber pistol, the Springfield and the Garand semi-automatic rifles, the

[Turn page]

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Browning automatic. Study of these weapons formed a valuable background for his understanding of the more complex machine-gun and aerial cannon course that still lay ahead of him.

The Browning Machine-Gun

In the machine-gun course, the first of his advanced studies, he was carefully schooled for several weeks in the mechanisms, the maintenance and operation of the aircraft machine-gun. He dismantled it in competition with his classmates, he studied the ingenuity of a man who applied himself to machine-guns many years ago.

This man's name was Browning, and he is responsible more than any other single person or group of persons for the superiority of American automatic weapons over those of our allies and enemies alike.

Our lad in training, having learned the history of his weapon, shot it on the range, learning to spot malfunctions almost before they prepared. Here, too, he learned the operation of the 20- and 37-millimeter cannon and the intricacies of the precise nose fuse which make these cannon one of aircraft's most potent weapons.

By this time, one out of every four of his classmates had been washed out. The test had been frequent and exacting, the classwork rigorous in the extreme—because it is no cinch to become the kind of armorer Uncle Sam needs to service his fighting planes these days.

He Puts in Plenty of Long, Hard Hours

Later in his advanced phases, he learned about the construction and maintenance of gun-sights and bomb racks with their maze of restricted details. He went out on "the line"—which is airman's terminology for the hangar and apron area where planes are housed and serviced. Here he spent weeks, picking up actual experience in synchronizing machine-gun fire, setting bomb releases and the like.

He put in hard hours learning the fusing of the practice bombs, overhauling the guns, inspecting the racks, belting the rounds and performing myriad other duties that are the "practicing armorer's." After several weeks of this hard schooling, the school officials handed him a diploma certifying him to be a graduate armorer.

A finished product, he stood by then, waiting to be shipped to one of the Air Forces tactical units. The \$2,300 the government spent on him began to pay dividends with compound interest thereafter. He had left a place in civilian life to become the world's finest armorer.

If he won top grades and showed marked technical aptitude, he is, perhaps, retained and sent to Lowry Field's Power Turret School. The current concept of operating fixed guns from revolving turrets, harmonized with precision of the gun-sights, has become an important phase of bomber defense, and we are training thousands of men for adequate maintenance and turret repair.

Any night in the week, you'll see the lights burning along armament row at Lowry. Three shifts are operated on a twenty-four-hour basis for the duration of the course. Men are learning a technical lore at all hours of the day and night. In the middle 1920s, when the school was founded at Chanute Field, Illinois, there was only one shift and that a short one.

Armament training was in its experimental stage then. In February, 1938, the armament division was transferred to Lowry Field under the direction of Captain Herbert W. Anderson, now Lieutenant Colonel Anderson, Executive Officer at the Air Forces Gunnery School at Las Vegas, Nevada.

A dozen officers have headed the armament school since. At present, Lieutenant Colonel William F. Day, a soldier-scholar with long years of Air Forces technical experience behind him, is the school's director. Since the late 1930s, the hundreds of armament students have swelled into thousands, and the thousands have multiplied to scores of thousands.

Armament—the Aerial Gunnery

As a matter of fact, so important is the armorer to Uncle Sam's Air Forces that, day and night, seven days a week, they are training aviation cadets at the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command School at Yale University to be armament officers, men trained to supervise the work of the armorers in combat zones.

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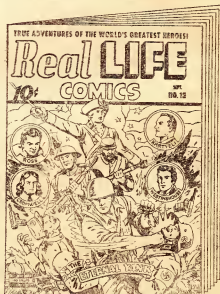
destruction which has drawn students from almost all of the United Nations. Cadets are taught the use and operation of standard weapons and secret weapons.

But to return to the human mass production line at Lowry Field, the armament school is really a preparatory school for the Air Forces Gunnery School. Graduation from armament school is a virtual prerequisite for admission to aerial gunnery. A soldier should know his gun before he shoots it.

Lowry men do, and consequently man the guns in many of the Allies' ace flying outfits. Lowry men won hero awards with General Doolittle on his daring Tokyo raid. Lowry men have poured hot lead on the *Luftwaffe* over the North Sea, over Egypt, Libya, Tripolitania, Tunisia, France, Italy and Germany itself. It is safe to predict that they will follow the destinies of the Allied air fleet wherever it goes.

The men with the wings on their tunics fly 'em all right, but it's a decent bet that it's the armorers who drive the thumb-tacks in that "Keep 'Em Flying" sign. Created by the Technical Training Command, they are the men who put the sting in the speed of American flying power, the men who turn the air into death for the Axis—disciples of the great god fire-power!

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(Continued from page 85)

That done, he switched off the light and hunched forward as though about to spring. Seconds ticked by and became minutes. And the minutes mounted up one on top of the other. After a while he heard the click in his inter-com phones, then the voice of Collins. The pilot's voice sounded tight and a thousand miles away.

"Approaching target, Bombardier! Get ready to take over."

"All set here, Captain," Hanlon replied, and wondered why speaking the words seemed to make his throat ache.

Hardly had the last word left his lips than he heard the sharp voice of the tail gunner.

"Aircraft to port and below, Captain. Any orders?"

"Hold your fire unless attacked!" Captain Collins barked back. "Okay, everybody! Ready for the run. Take over, Bombardier! She's all yours now. Lay 'em where they'll hurt!"

For a brief instant there was joy in Hanlon's heart. Something about Collins' voice made him feel good. Maybe Collins was not such a bad guy at that. Funny how Fate had worked things out. Four months ago it was Rabaul, and Collins was doing the flying. Now it was Holland, and Collins was still doing the flying. But how—

He shook the rest out of his head and glued his eye to the rubber piece on the sight. At the same time he adjusted his flap mike so that he could speak directly into it. That left his two hands free, his right one ready to yank the bomb release lever at exactly the right split second.

Beginning then, time seemed to cease. The target, the flying boat base, at Helder Bay was ahead and down. It was a little to the left of true center, and Hanlon snapped orders to Collins to change the course of the plane. The craft smacked a strong wind current and veered off again. Following his every order Collins brought the big ship back on true center again.

The sound of the engines seemed to fade away to Hanlon. He felt as though they were in the middle of a big silent cloud, and that Collins, the navigator, and the two gunners were

[Turn page]

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holding their collective breath waiting for the instant he would jerk the release and yell, "Bombs away!"

He had a crazy desire to laugh, and shout at the top of his voice. Every nerve in his body felt like a red hot wire that would snap any second. But there were no beads of sweat on his forehead, and his heart was not pounding any harder than usual.

JUST a few moments, now. Just a few moments more. The target was close, very close. A sneak raid was right! Wonder if they heard the bomber down there? Not a light showing. Nothing but shadowy silhouettes. Wonder if the Number Two bomber had started its run, yet? Wonder if—

At that moment the black night seemed to be split apart by a gigantic orange and red sword. A huge orange and red sword that slashed straight up into his glasshouse and with a roaring burst of sound drove his eardrums deep into his head. He seemed to hang in flashing space while his body tried to fly away in small pieces.

The thunder rolled and rolled inside his head, but, somehow, he managed to keep his eye glued to the rubber piece of the sight. Just an inch more for the target to creep through his sight. Half an inch—a quarter of an inch. Get your hand on the lever. Get your hand—

But he couldn't move his hand! He couldn't move either hand. There was no feeling in either of them. He heard himself cursing and sobbing through clenched teeth. He found himself looking down through a sea of red. It was blood from a cut on his head pouring into his eyes.

He saw that his left hand was pinned under a buckled glasshouse girder. He was powerless to move it. His right hand was not pinned, but it was all smeared with blood. And there was not an ounce of feeling or movement in any finger.

The target square in his sights, and he was unable to yank the release lever! The lever not a dozen inches from his hand, but he could only stare at it out of agonized eyes. In another few seconds the sights would be off the target. The bomber would be past, and Collins would have to risk swinging around for another run after

Number Two had dropped its eggs.

But what chance would Collins have to swing back for a return run then? There would be a curtain of fire in the sky by then. The curtain was starting up now. The Nazis had heard them overhead, and were slamming up a mighty barrage of steel.

"Oh, God, I must, I must!" Hanlon groaned and strained his face toward the bomb lever.

His pinned left hand was full of white fire now, and his left arm extended to its fullest length. But the bomb release lever was still a couple of inches from his straining lips. He lurched forward with every ounce of his strength and his whole body seemed to be engulfed by an ocean of white fire. He didn't have any left arm now. It must have been pulled right out at the shoulder socket, for there was no pain in his pinned left hand. Just a dead nothingness.

Suddenly he thought he heard Collins' voice in the inter-com screaming at him. He was not sure, and at that exact moment he had strained his head forward the last fraction of an inch and had the end of the release handle between his teeth.

He drew white fire into his lungs, then flung himself backward with his teeth, biting hard on the release handle. He had the sensation of being kicked in the mouth by a mule. Then black night came crashing down on top of his head, and he went spinning off into silent space. . . .

WHEN he next opened his eyes it was to find himself between the clean white sheets of a bed in the Base Hospital. Both hands were wound round and round by miles of gauze bandage, and his mouth felt as though it were full of telephone poles. Added to that there was some bandage wound around his head and a dull ache in the middle of his brain.

As all that came to him he suddenly saw Captain Collins standing beside

[Turn page]

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the bed. The pilot was looking down at him and smiling with his lips and his eyes. "The bomb load!" he heard himself mumble through the mouth full of telephone poles. "Did I—"

"You did, Hanlon," Captain Collins said, and held up a silencing hand. "Don't try to talk, old man. You're missing three front teeth, and your mouth's cut up a bit. But you hit the target smacko, Hanlon. We didn't realize what you had done until we got back and were on the ground. We had to saw you out of your glass-house. That lucky first anti-aircraft burst practically tore it off. Lucky you weren't killed."

"But, Hanlon, I just wanted to tell you this, then I'll get out of here and let you sleep. As soon as you're fit again, you're my bombardier. For keeps! Maybe that'll help make up for the dopey things I thought at Rabaul. Like I said, I've done a lot of thinking since then, and when I saw your name on the list yesterday, I—"

Collins stopped and fumbled around for words. Hanlon saw the flush in his cheeks, and the funny look in his eyes. And suddenly Hanlon knew the truth.

"That list, Captain!" he mumbled. "My name wasn't down as your bombardier, was it? You had me assigned to your ship?"

"Well, yes, Hanlon," Collins said, with a nod. "Seeing you again . . . Well, I suddenly knew that you had told the truth. To get you assigned to my bomber made me stop feeling a heel. I . . . Oh, nuts! I can't put it into words. Do me a favor, will you? Let's both forget all about Rabaul. Okay, Hanlon?"



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"Okay, Captain," Hanlon said. "By me it's okay, and everything is swell again. Just don't get yourself shot down until I get out of here. We've got places to go, Captain. Lots of places!"

HAS-BEENS DIE HARD

(Concluded from page 78)

"Then I'll put it in plain words!" the *Tornado's* commander barked, though there was a faint twinkle in his eyes. "The *Tornado's* officers, led by Lieutenant Commander Walters, have put in the demand that you retain your active service status aboard my ship. And not be transferred to shore duty.

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Rear Admiral Cottonwood stopped talking, because he was talking to a sleeping man with a happy smile on his lips.

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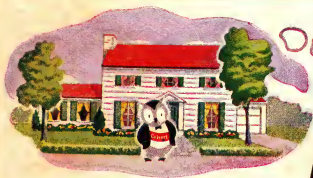


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